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Pray thee who hast in hand my book or tome
to read it well — and then to send it home.

SECRETS OF EFFECTIVE LIVING

BY

JAMES GORDON GILKEY

A Faith for the New Generation

Secrets of Effective Living

SECRETS OF EFFECTIVE LIVING

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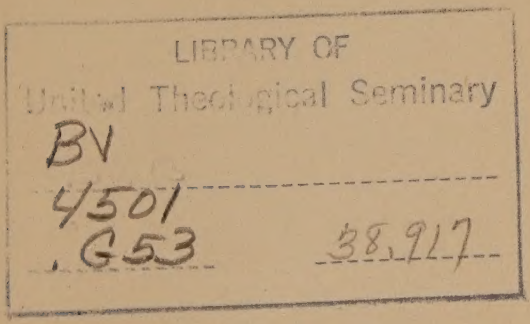

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TO

MRS. GEORGE E. HOWE

With the gratitude and affection
of her son-in-law

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FOREWORD

In a volume published last year[1] I ventured the assertion that two great tasks confront the liberal Christianity of our time. The first is the task of adjusting Christian teaching to the new intellectual and social environment of to-day. The second is the task of discovering for the men and women of our generation, most of them baffled by inner problems and outer difficulties, the way to live happily and effectively. The volume published a year ago dealt with the first of these tasks. This volume deals with the second.

Anyone who has the chance to study modern men and women at first hand will appreciate the need for simple and practical discussions like the ones attempted here. Scores of people to-day, able to solve the new problems of science and economics, find themselves baffled by the old problems of fear, disappointment,

[1] J. G. Gilkey, *A Faith for the New Generation.*

and inward bitterness. In recent years a number of books have been written to meet their need. Some of these books have done great good, as many of us can testify from personal experience. It seems, however, that most of these volumes were prepared by physicians, psychiatrists, social workers, or the enthusiastic advocates of some new religious or semi-religious cult. The present volume proposes to utilize, in the quest for a more victorious life for the individual, not only the new truths discovered in our time but also the age-old convictions of Christian faith. If Christianity is to survive in our swiftly-changing modern world it must offer more than a reasonable interpretation of life and an intellectually satisfying set of religious beliefs. It must offer in addition an effective way to meet life's everyday problems, a technique of living which will make hitherto defeated people "more than conquerors through Him that loved us." It is in the conviction that the liberal Christianity of our time has such a way of life to offer that these chapters have been written.

Some readers may feel that too much is said here about the efforts we make to save ourselves, and too little about the efforts which God makes to save us. Perhaps those who find themselves making this criticism will read carefully the final chapter of this book, and also the chapter on "Getting God's help in daily life" in the volume "A Faith for the New Generation." The underlying assumption of both books is that God is always doing for us all everything that love can do. The purpose of the present volume is not to discuss the nature and the extent of that divine help. Rather it is to show the ordinary person what he himself can do, in immediate and practical ways, to win his share of that victory which he and God will finally complete together.

JAMES GORDON GILKEY.

April, 1927.

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SECRETS OF EFFECTIVE LIVING

In the day that I am afraid I will trust in thee
456 3

SECRETS OF EFFECTIVE LIVING

Chapter I

LEARNING TO LIVE WITHOUT WORRY

I

In the opening chapter of a recent book Basil King makes this interesting confession:

> When I say that during most of my life I have been the prey of fear, I take it I am expressing the case of most people. I cannot remember a time when a dread of one kind or another was not in the air. In childhood it was the fear of going to bed, later it was the fear of school, still later it was the experience of waking in the morning with a feeling of dismay at the amount of work that had to be done before night. In some form or other fear dogs every one of us. The mother is afraid for

> her children, the father is afraid for his business, most of us are afraid for our job. There is not a home or an office, a school or a church, in which some hang-dog apprehension is not eating at the hearts of the people who go in and out. I am ready to guess that all the miseries wrought by sin and sickness combined would not equal those we bring on ourselves through fear. We are not sick all the time. We are not sinning all the time. But most of us are always afraid—afraid of something or somebody.[1]

Anyone who, like a doctor or a minister, has the chance to study human lives at first hand will be inclined to agree with those statements. Fear is one of our universal and perennial problems. Probably most of the people who are trying to read these words will find—if they study their own thoughts carefully—that their attention is pitifully divided between this chapter and some secret anxiety that has been slinking after them for days.

[1] Basil King, *The Conquest of Fear.*

God pity all the worried folk
With griefs they do not tell,
Women waking in the night
And men dissembling well.
God pity all the brave who go
The common road, and wear
No ribboned medal on their breast,
No laurel in their hair.[2]

II

How can a man conquer his fears? How can he learn to live without worry? Suppose we admit at the outset that there are several factors in the situation which affect our problem profoundly but over which, unfortunately, we have only an indirect control. Our physical condition is one. If a man is being worn out nervously or physically by disease or overwork, his battle with fear and worry will be far harder than it should be. His difficulties root themselves not so much in faulty ideas and ideals as in an exhausted body and nervous system. If he wants to conquer worry the best way to begin will be to build up his reserves of strength.

[2] Louise Driscoll.

Similarly our struggle with fear is profoundly affected by our environment. There are many homes which are deeply shadowed by the presence of some individual whose outlook on life has been unhappily distorted. The effect of living in such an environment is usually disastrous. The members of such a family, forever weighed down with a burden of implied failure and despair, find it tragically easy to become the victims of fears which normally situated men and women readily throw off. Here again the explanation of their defeat lies at least partly in an external situation over which they have relatively little control.

It is also clear that temperament plays a large part in our victory over anxiety or our surrender to it. There are some individuals who were blessed at birth with an instinctive and an almost invincible optimism which gives them an enormous advantage as they begin the struggle with fear. Consider for example Fanny Crosby, the blind hymn-writer of the last century. She was born in rural New York

in 1823, and when only six years of age lost her sight. Many children thus fated to go through life in utter darkness would have lapsed into growing depression and fatal self-pity. But Fanny Crosby's cheerful temperament saved her. In her eighth year she wrote:

O what a happy child I am,
Although I cannot see!
I am resolved that in this world
Contented I will be.
How many blesings I enjoy
That other people don't;
To weep and sigh because I'm blind
I cannot and I won't!

Equally striking is the statement she made on her ninety-second birthday, after eighty-six years of total blindness: "I never fret, never worry, never think disagreeable thoughts, never find fault with anything or anybody. If in all the world you can find a happier person than I am, do bring him to me. I should like to shake his hand." There, obviously, is a singularly radiant and hopeful personality. Such an individual begins the battle against worry with enormously powerful allies.

All this has a very practical meaning for the men and women who find the struggle with chronic anxiety one of their hardest problems. You say you have been the victim of fear ever since you can remember? Perhaps the fault is not wholly yours. You have been contending with a body and a set of nerves that were never wholly satisfactory. You have been handicapped by a domestic situation which has made the impulse toward anxiety far stronger than it should have been. You have been burdened from birth with a temperament which, when all is said, leaves a great deal to be desired. You must not berate yourself too bitterly for occasional failures. In reality you are to be understood rather than condemned.

III

Granting all this, how can a man increase his victory over fear? Here are several practical suggestions.

Whenever you find yourself growing apprehensive, remind yourself that worry is always a waste of effort. Why is it a waste of effort?

Because life has a strange habit of developing in unexpected ways, thrusting new elements into a given situation at the last moment and changing suddenly and completely the anticipated outcome. Time and again the disasters which we expect fail to materialize. Time and again the opportunities we thought were gone forever are thrust again within our reach. There is a striking illustration in the experience of Samuel F. B. Morse, the inventor of the telegraph. He had spent his years and his means developing the new device, and finally the strain of a whole lifetime concentrated in one day of terrific anxiety. In 1843 a bill was submitted to Congress authorizing the expenditure of Federal funds for the construction of the experimental telegraph line which Morse needed but which he could not finance himself. Morse knew that if the bill passed his future would be secure. He knew that if it failed his prospects were dreary at best. All day on March 3, 1843 he sat in the Senate Gallery, hoping against hope that the bill would be reached and passed before the session closed

at midnight. The debate on previous legislation dragged interminably, and the hours raced by with disconcerting speed. Finally, as the hands of the clock neared midnight, Morse called the two senators who were sponsoring the bill and asked what the prospects were. They looked at the clock and then at the long list of bills still to be considered. Then they told Morse he had better give up hope. There was no possible chance that the appropriation could be secured at that session of Congress.

Here is Morse's own account of the moments that followed: "With this unhappy prospect before me, I left the Senate Chamber just before midnight, returned to my hotel, and made all arrangements for leaving Washington the next day." Then follows a sentence which indicates the strength of Morse's faith and self-mastery: "Knowing from long experience whence my help must come in hours of difficulty, I soon disposed of all my cares and slept as quietly as a child."

But was that the end of the story? As

Morse was eating breakfast the next morning he was called out of the hotel dining room and told—to his utter amazement—that his bill, along with a number of others, had been hastily passed just after he left the Senate Gallery. What a waste of effort a night of sleeplessness and worry would have been! . . . You are torturing yourself today with anxieties about tomorrow? It is safe to say that out of every ten disasters which apprehensive people expect, nine can be counted on to vanish before the fatal moment arrives.

Suppose the tenth disaster does materialize. What then? Surely you realize that worry will neither prevent nor change that unhappy situation. Suppose, for example, that the dividends you fear will not be paid next month actually do fail to arrive. Lying awake every night this month worrying about the situation will not help matters in the slightest. As a matter of fact, worry will make you steadily less able to manage that inevitable disappointment when it comes. You may as well recognize your helplessness, relax the tension you

are putting on yourself, and wait for the future to bring a sequence of events which is, as far as you are concerned, predetermined. Or suppose your children do fail in their examinations, do make mistakes in conduct, and do bring embarrassment on you and your friends. Worrying about those situations at this distance and at this late date will not change matters. The forces that are slowly bringing about those crises, or (and this is quite as likely) preparing to save your children from disaster at the last moment, were put into operation years ago when you gave your boys and girls their childhood training. You may as well recognize that the situation is now out of your hands, abandon your futile worries, and wait for the future to bring its own inevitable developments. "O rest in the Lord, wait patiently for Him"—surely you see the meaning of those old words. They mean that we must do our best as long as action is possible, and then when action is no longer possible leave our uncertain and perplexing situations quietly and confidently in God's

hands. When we have done our best, God can be trusted to supplement it with His best. Until a man recognizes that fact and begins to live upon that principle, worry will always be one of his hardest problems.

Serene I fold my hands and wait,
Nor care for wind or tide or sea,
I rave no more 'gainst time or fate,
For lo, my own shall come to me.

What matter if I stand alone?
I wait with joy the coming years;
My heart shall reap where it hath sown,
And gather up its fruit of tears.

The stars come nightly to the sky,
The tidal wave comes to the sea,
Nor time nor space, nor deep nor high,
Can keep my own away from me.[8]

IV

When you find yourself beginning to worry, remind yourself also that you will never have to face more than one problem at a time. Your difficulties will always come upon you in single file, never in concerted attack. In a given

[8] John Burroughs.

instant of time only one difficulty can possibly emerge to perplex you. By handling problems quietly and in sequence you can always contrive to solve them.

Here is a fact which tired and apprehensive people almost invariably forget. They say to us with unmistakable bewilderment, "How can I ever get through this impossible day? Look at the collection of things I must do before night. A dozen business problems, a score of letters to write, fifty difficult decisions to make, and all day long an unbroken line of people trying to reach me and sell me something I do not want to buy. A life like that is too much for human endurance." But look again at that terrifying day, remembering that in a single instant of time only one problem can possibly emerge to perplex us. That man can solve his business problems one at a time, abandoning all thought of trying to handle them in mass. He can dictate letters one after the other, resolutely refusing to think of the second till the first is finished. He can make his fifty decisions in sequence, and quietly

inform one persistent solicitor after another that he is not interested in buying books or increasing his insurance. Living one moment at a time, facing one difficulty at a time, carrying one burden at a time, you will be astonished to see how much you can do and how easily you can do it if you will begin to live on that principle.

God broke the years to hours and days
That hour by hour and day by day
Just going on a little way
We might be able all along
To keep our spirit poised and strong.
Should all the weight of life
Be laid across our shoulders, and the future, rife
With woe and struggle, meet us face to face
In one small place
We could not go,
Our hearts would faint, and so
God lays a little on us every day.
Never on the years' long way
Will burdens bear so deep
Or pathways rise so steep
But we can struggle on, if by God's power
We learn to bear our burden hour by hour.

Suppose one of these single-file problems proves more difficult than we anticipated.

Suppose, trying to live one moment at a time, we suddenly confront a major crisis. What then?

It is a great source of strength to realize that no matter what situations emerge in life, people always find a way to go on living. This quality of resourcefulness has been built into our nature by millions of years of human and sub-human evolution. It is one of our greatest spiritual assets today. Basil King writes:

> In the long ages of evolution nothing has ever permanently defeated the life-principle. For millions of years it was threatened by changes of climate, by the scarcity of food, by the ferocity of fellow-creatures. Heat, cold, drouth, earthquake, and volcanic eruption were forever against it. Pursued through the water, it found refuge on land. Pursued on land, it sought the open sky. Pursued in the sky, it developed fleetness of wing and a wholly new ability to soar, balance, dip, and even swing on itself in the empty air. Had it been possible to exterminate the

life-principle this would have happened during the age of the great reptiles. But the life-principle went on, assuming in our time all the forms from the bacillus to the elephant. Long before it worked its way up to man it found the way to stem innumerable attacks. For one danger it developed a shell, for another a sting, for another a poison. In order to breathe in the sea it put forth gills. When it was stranded on the land it changed the gills to lungs. To withstand glacial cold it grew fur. When heat and cold attacked it by turns it changed the fur to feathers. When climates became temperate it produced hair. The life-principle can never be defeated. When it encounters difficulties it either cuts right through them, or shows a marvellous ability to find a way around them.'

Where does this life-principle reach its highest development? In human beings. This ability to adjust to difficult circumstance, this

' Basil King, *The Conquest of Fear.*

power to meet and master hardships, has been building itself up in mankind for uncounted centuries. You say that hard work and disappointment, physical pain and spiritual distress might well be too much for you? That if a certain thing happened in the next few weeks you could never go on living? Nothing of the kind! No matter what happens you will find yourself stronger than circumstance. The results of a million years of growth cannot be unraveled over night.

We see a sorrow rising in our way,
We strive to flee from the approaching ill,
We seek some small escape, we weep and pray,
But when the blow falls then our hearts are still. . . .
Not that the pain is of its sharpness shorn:
We find it can be borne.

V

Here is still another suggestion for those who seek victory over fear. Gain, by constant practice, the power to control your own mind.

Most men and women have attained a certain physical self-mastery, but few have succeeded in establishing control over their thoughts and

emotions. For most of us, for instance, it is no small feat to hold our attention firmly on one subject for even five minutes. John Donne, the English preacher of the early seventeenth century, left behind a description of the difficulties he had in attending to his own prayers. His quaint sentences recall a problem that is familiar today:

> I throw myself down in my chamber and call in God and His holy angels, but when they are there I neglect them for the buzzing of a fly, the rattling of a coach, the whining of a door. I pray on in the same posture—eyes lifted up and knees bowed down as though I really talked with God. But if God should ask me what I last thought about Him in that prayer, I could not tell. Sometimes I forget what I am about, but when I began to forget I cannot say. A noise in mine ear, a straw under my knee, a memory of yesterday's pleasures, a fear of tomorrow's dangers—all trouble me in my prayer.

There is the frank confession of a man who had not yet gained control of his attention.

Even more unfortunate is the plight of those whose instinctive emotions have never been brought firmly under control. Unstrung by fear or jealousy, these men and women let their suddenly aroused feelings drag them helplessly through a maze of anxiety, bitterness, and despair. Such individuals may be able to manage their fists and their feet, but their emotions are obviously too much for them. Their first problem is to gain that mastery over their own inner nature, their own mental processes, of which Jesus spoke so vividly in the Sermon on the Mount. It was to such uncontrolled individuals that Edward Carpenter addressed his familiar lines:

Do not pay too much attention to the wandering mind;
When you have trained it, informed it, made it your
flexible instrument and tool,
Then do not reverse the order and become its attendant.
Quite decisively, day by day,
Leave your mind in silence and abeyance,
With its tyrannous thoughts and demands,

Its funny little fears and its fancies,
The long legacy of ages of animal evolution,
Slip out and go your own way till your mind follows you,
Absolutely determined not to be bound by its conclusions,
Or fossilized into the patterns it may invent;
For that would be to give up your kingdom
And bow down your neck to death.

Such thoughts bring us to the very crux of this problem of worry. In the final analysis, why is it that you give way to generalized apprehensions, to unfounded and essentially needless fears? In your saner moments you know that you have enough physical strength and nervous resilience to get through the busy days. You know you have enough skill, enough friends, enough resources to meet any normal demand. You know there is a Living God who can be trusted to care for you and those you love, in life and in death. These convictions have been built into you by childhood training, and by the experience of life itself. Why, knowing all this, do you lose your grip on yourself and lapse into a pitiful state of self-distrust and fear? The reason

is obvious. You have not yet gained complete mastery over your own mind. You have not yet brought your emotions, your imagination, your attention under perfect control.

Here, then, is a definite point at which you can begin your effort to learn to live without worry. Build up by long and determined practice the power of mental and emotional self-mastery. When the worry impulse wakens within you resolutely hold your mind off the dismal forebodings it will strive to flash before you. Keep your thought fixed on some great truth like this: "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee. I will never leave thee nor forsake thee. The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath thee are the everlasting arms." Centuries ago a Hebrew poet wrote out of his own hard experience, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose *mind* is stayed on Thee." What was that but the mental self-mastery of which we are speaking?

VI

What does God do to help us in the midst

of an effort like this? So far we have been discussing the ways by which we help ourselves. Does God do for us anything which we cannot do for ourselves, or are we left ultimately to save ourselves or perish?

It seems obvious that God does not help us by suddenly obliterating our problem, or by giving us miraculous power to solve it. Those who expect ingrained habits of worry to be instantly wiped out, or who look for quick and startling accessions of unearned moral strength are—if the experience of the past is any guide for the present and the future—doomed to disappointment. God's help comes in simpler and more normal ways. Whenever you gain from the wisdom and the experience of others new help in your own problem, then God is bringing you His help. Whenever you find within your own heart a new determination to use all your intelligence and all your will-power in the struggle to win victory, then God is bringing you His help. Whenever, in the midst of actual conflict with evil habit or thwarting circumstance, you find an old mem-

ory or an old ideal giving you a quick hint of the way in which the battle can be won, then God is bringing you His help. Whenever, in hours of despair and weary surrender, you find something within your own nature bidding you renew the struggle and making you dream of victory even in the face of a thousand old defeats, then God is bringing you His help. It is through normal processes rather than in spite of them that God strengthens and inspires us. It is in His light that we see whatever light comes to us. It is in His strength, mediated day by day through the wisdom and the experience of the race, and rising hour by hour in the fresh courage and hope of our own indomitable human nature, that we finally become "more than conquerors."

Chapter II

MAKING THE MOST OF ORDINARY ABILITIES

I

In a recent volume of verse you will find this quaint parable of human life. The symbols are strange, but anyone who reads with imagination can catch the underlying meaning:

> A fox looked at his shadow at sunrise and said,
> "I will have a camel for lunch today!"
> And all morning he went about looking for camels. . . .
> But at noon he saw his shadow again, and he said,
> "A mouse will do." [1]

Sooner or later all of us pass through that process of personal disillusionment. We begin life fancying we are gifted with unusual ability. Some day we will startle the world with our achievement, make a magnificent and enduring contribution to the life of the race. But by middle-age or even earlier this attitude quietly

[1] Kahlil Gibran.

changes. We are driven to the conclusion that we are only ordinary people after all. Our ability is decidedly limited, and our achievements will be commonplace at best. The fox eat a camel for lunch? Probably not. A very small mouse will have to do instead. In the course of the years all of us have to make this embarrassing adjustment to reality. When the time comes to deflate our youthful expectations, what can we do to keep the modicum of courage and self-confidence we all need?

II

We can certainly recall the fact that there is nothing unusual or uncomplimentary about being an ordinary person. Great ability is a very rare thing, far rarer than most disheartened men and women imagine. The overwhelming majority of the people about us are everyday individuals, with an ordinary mind, an ordinary personality, and resources of strength and endurance which again and again prove inadequate. To borrow Jesus' familiar figure of speech, they are one-talent or two-

talent rather than five-talent people. Think, for one thing, how rare great mental ability is. The intelligence tests given the American Army during the War made that point painfully clear. "The tests were given to more than 1,700,000 men. Of this number—a cross-section of the manhood of the nation—only 13% proved to have superior mental endowment. Of this gifted group only one-third reached the highest grade on the examinations. The implication is that of the young men in America today only about 4% possess outstanding intellectual gifts." The next time an embarrassing failure convinces you that you have only an ordinary mind, remember that there is nothing unusual about that situation. Of the next one hundred people you see on the street, ninety-six will have ordinary minds too!

Great executive ability and great success seem quite as rare. The plain fact is that most people have to struggle through the day's work with the help of ordinary native gifts, an ordinary training, and ordinary inspirations and incentives. When the day's work is done they

certainly have to content themselves with an ordinary amount of appreciation, recognition, and financial return. In these days when the pay of a few individuals who are highly gifted and highly advertised (perhaps also highly fortunate) receives so much publicity, it is well for us to remember that we are not the only victims of a limited income. As a matter of fact most of our contemporaries are face to face with a perennial financial problem. According to the Federal Income Tax returns of 1916 the following people had that year a total income of less than $3,000:

4 lawyers out of every 5
8 engineers out of every 9
13 doctors out of every 14
21 salesmen out of every 22
79 ministers out of every 80
199 teachers out of every 200
399 farmers out of every 400

Granted that the War brought a significant rise in wages for almost everyone. We must also remember that the post-war dollar was worth far less than the pre-war dollar. The ordinary man—in mental ability, success, and

financial standing—is still the dominant figure in contemporary life.

But are ordinary people necessarily unhappy? One of the great days in any man's spiritual growth is the day when he realizes that the best things in life are within the reach of ordinary people. Five-talent men are not the only ones who gain the durable satisfactions of life. One and two-talent men find them too.

Life did not bring me silken gowns
Or jewels for my hair,
Or sight of gabled foreign towns
In distant countries fair.
But I can glimpse beyond my door
A green and friendly hill,
And red geraniums aflame
Upon my window-sill.

So if my dreamings ne'er come true,
The brightest and the best,
But leave me lone my journey through,
I'll set my heart at rest.
I'll thank Thee, Lord, for humble things,
A green and friendly hill,
And red geraniums aflame
Upon my window-sill.[2]

[2] Martha H. Clark.

Here is an attitude toward life which is desperately needed today. All about us are men and women dominated by a wild desire to achieve vast wealth and spectacular success. Suppose you miss the great fortune on which you have set your heart. You can still find the world filled with beauty, as numberless common folk have done before you. You can still discover the splendor of simple flowers and ordinary hills, the glory of a home in which the love between parents and children outlasts the years, and the deep satisfaction that comes from work—even ordinary work—done to the best of your ability. Think of Jesus' experience. He lived and died a poor man. There was only a flash of outward success at the beginning of His career, and after that the shadow of failure fell more and more heavily upon His path. But was Jesus unhappy? He speedily discovered what numberless brave souls have been discovering ever since—that a man's inner happiness has little relation to his outward circumstances. How

His words, proved true century after century, recall us from the blunders of our money-mad age! "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth." "A man's life consisteth not in the abundance of things which he possesseth." "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." You do not have to have five talents of anything to be happy. Enduring happiness is within the reach of us all, no matter how few our gifts or our achievements.

III

But that is only part of the story. Anyone who studies life and watches people will soon realize that some individuals find ways of gaining extraordinary results with ordinary equipment. Their native endowment may be only a single talent, but through study and self-discipline they learn to use that one talent so effectively that it becomes the practical equivalent of the five talents some of their more fortunate rivals are using carelessly. Theodore Roosevelt's career offers a striking example.

Other people may have credited him with phenomenal native ability, but he himself had no such illusions. To one enthusiastic admirer he wrote:

> No, you are wrong about me. I am only an ordinary person, without special ability in any line. In most things I am only slightly above the average, and in many I am frankly under than over. This is certainly true of my physical equipment. I can't run. I'm only an ordinary walker and only a fair swimmer. I can probably ride a horse better than I can do anything else, but I am certainly not a remarkable horseman. Neither am I a good shot. My eyesight is not strong, and I have to be close to my game to get any aim at all. As far as literary gifts are concerned, I am certainly not a brilliant writer. I have written a good deal, but I always have to slave over everything I put on paper.

Mr. Roosevelt had mastered one of the fine arts of life, the art of making the most of

ordinary abilities. Can those of us who face the same problem draw any practical suggestions from him and from men like him in the past?

IV

One suggestion is fairly obvious. If we hope to achieve extraordinary results with ordinary equipment, we must put more thought, more imagination, more mental energy into the work we do. Scores of commonplace individuals, learning to give their task this last full measure of sheer intelligence, have found themselves emerging from the ranks and entering the little circle of leaders.

There, for instance, is a hard-working German scientist named Roentgen. He is puttering away in his laboratory one afternoon in 1895. On the table before him is a vacuum tube through which a powerful current of electricity is being driven. During the course of the experiment Roentgen's eye happens to fall on a sheet of cardboard lying on a bench on the other side of the room. To his surprise the surface of the cardboard is glowing as

though a strong light were falling upon it. Where did that light come from? Years later someone said to Roentgen, "What did you think when you saw the cardboard glowing?" The old man replied grimly, "I didn't just think. I investigated." And those investigations, carried on with the utmost skill and patience, led to the X-ray apparatus of today. Roentgen's habit of giving his work his utmost attention, imagination, and study enabled him to achieve phenomenal results with an ordinary native equipment.

Even more interesting is the story of our own Eli Whitney. More than a century ago he went to the South to court the girl of his fancy. At the time he was a young man with a knack for mechanics, but there was no suggestion of genius about him. During his stay at the plantation where this girl lived some of the near-by cotton planters told him of their difficulty in extracting the seeds from raw cotton. If someone could only devise a machine to do that slow and laborious work! That night Whitney lay awake for a long time think-

ing about the problem. A machine that would pull the seeds out of cotton. . . . Long after midnight he went to the window to get a breath of fresh air. The moonlight filled the plantation yard, and there before him was a strange sight. A cat had killed one of the chickens and was trying desperately to pull the body between the bars of the coop. But the space between the slats was too narrow, and every time the cat's paw came out there was nothing but a mass of white feathers upon it. The chicken's body stayed perversely behind. Whitney smiled, turned back to go to bed . . . and then began to think more vigorously than ever. Why not get the seeds out of the cotton that way? Build an iron claw that would pull the cotton fibers through a fine mesh, leaving the hard seeds behind. There was an idea . . . and a week later Whitney had worked out the first rough sketch of his cotton gin. You want to make the most of your small abilities? Put more thought, more attention, more imagination into the work you are doing. The world is full of men and women who go about their

career half intelligently. They give their work part of their interest, but they never turn upon the problems involved their utmost mental power. If they did they would surprise themselves by their achievement. Native ability is not everything. An acquired power of concentration counts for quite as much.

V

Another suggestion that comes to us from the past is this. We should learn to make our hardest effort when we are being defeated. The few men and women who have that ability more than make up, through this power, for limitations in their native gifts. They may not be able to compete with others on the basis of inherent genius. They are, however, more than a match for their rivals in their capacity to meet obstacles and still keep advancing.

Some time ago there was unveiled at one of our mid-western universities an unusual memorial tablet. It was erected in honor of a graduate who was definitely termed an "average man." During his undergraduate days he took

part in a number of university activities, but he never won a prize or an election to an important office. He went out for football every year, but he never played on the first team or took part in one of the important games. His scholastic grades averaged only B, and he was not eligible for any major academic honor. But year after year this young fellow did his best, struggling valiantly to win a place for himself in the classroom and on the athletic field. During the War he served in the medical corps, and one day met his death trying to rescue a wounded man under fire. The French Government awarded him the Croix de Guerre, and friends in this country erected a memorial tablet at his Alma Mater. The inscription on that tablet is one which men of ordinary gifts would do well to ponder deeply: "He played four years on the Scrubs, but he never quit." That young man built into himself an ability which promised to make up for the limitations in his endowment. He taught himself to make his hardest struggle when he was being beaten. Who questions that an ordinary man with that

capacity is more than a match for a gifted man without it?

How can a man gain this heroic quality? There seems to be only one way. He must fight for it. He must fight his own body, tired and pleading for rest. He must fight his own mind, whispering that he is beaten and that he can never turn defeat into victory. He must fight popular opinion, dubbing him an average man with no prospect of ever being more. Against these foes without and within he must pit his courage, his self-confidence, his indomitable will, and then drive himself to continue his efforts no matter what the odds are against him. When a man gains that capacity he wins something quite as precious as native gifts. Time and again this acquired power enables him to win extraordinary results with ordinary equipment.

VI

One who aspires to make the most of ordinary abilities should also learn to stay quiet—inwardly as well as outwardly—under mis-

understanding and abuse. A man who masters this art gains for himself an immense advantage in the struggle for attainment. The energy which other men waste in outward anger or inward bitterness he saves for more important uses.

Here is a lesson which men in public life speedily find they must learn. How quickly and how tragically they dissipate their power if they let themselves lose their temper, or even grow inwardly irritated! Listen to some of the abuse heaped on the Presidents of the past. Here is an early and an often quoted bit: "The present occupant of the White House is little better than a murderer. He is treacherous in private friendships, a hypocrite in public life, an impostor who has either abandoned all good principles or else never had any." Someone's opinion of George Washington! A few years later this paragraph appeared in a leading paper: "Learned fools are of all the greatest. Until lately political sophists have been calmly despised, but never trusted with power. Never before has

it been thought prudent to put knives in the hands of children." With love for Thomas Jefferson! But these sentences, uttered with malignant hatred toward one of the greatest Americans in history, are the worst of the lot: "The President is a low, cunning clown. He is the original gorilla. Those who seek the ape-man are fools to travel all the way to Africa when what they want can be so readily found in Springfield, Illinois." Who was that man talking about? Abraham Lincoln. All three Presidents, Lincoln supremely, faced a homely but an immensely important task. They had to learn to stay quiet—inwardly as well as outwardly—under misunderstanding and abuse.

Jesus faced the same task. Think of the way in which stupid people misunderstood His words, vicious people twisted His statements, disloyal and selfish people took advantage of His friendship, and prejudiced people finally plotted His death. When one studies the successive storms of abuse and hatred that Jesus encountered, His unfaltering self-control and poise seem incredible. Jesus' own family

whispers to the neighbors that He is mentally unbalanced and should not be heeded. The townsfolk of Nazareth drive Him out of their synagogue and try to push Him off the cliff on which their village is built. Jealous religious leaders spread the rumor that He is in league with Beelzebub, prince of the demons. Representatives of orthodox piety send a committee of heresy-hunters to trap Him in His speech. The High Priest himself concocts a plot to murder Him, and does it at the very time of a religious festival. The rabble of Jerusalem bawls, "Crucify Him!" Even one of the thieves dying with Jesus adds his abuse, and the pilgrims hurrying to the Holy City pause to jeer during His last moments. All that abuse . . . and yet from Jesus' unembittered lips come words the world has never been able to forget: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you . . . and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you." Suppose you gained some of that unruffled poise. Suppose you learned to listen to criticism and abuse—most of it unfair, undeserved, insincere

—without losing your composure, or permitting any of your priceless inner energy to burn itself up in protest and bitterness. Surely you realize what would happen. You would gain for yourself a power quite as precious as great native ability. The power to save the energy which the average man wastes in outward anger or inward irritation.

VII

Here is one other suggestion which experience has to offer. If you want to utilize your few gifts to the full, believe in your work. Believe it is worth doing, and that it is God's will for your life. A man who faces his career with that conviction gives himself assistance of almost incalculable value.

Some months ago a well-known character analyst in New York published a book telling of her experience interviewing discouraged and ineffective people. She made the statement that some seventy percent of the men and women who came to her for help felt secretly (so they confessed to her) that they were in

the wrong job. The majority of these self-designated misfits were thirty-five years of age or over. What is the immediate result of such an attitude of self-distrust and restlessness? These people waste in self-analysis and regret a large part of the energy they need for the immediate tasks of life. Day after day they make themselves miserable by questions like these: "Am I where I ought to be?" "Would I have been better off had I made other decisions ten years ago?" "Can I ever be sure this is the work God meant me to do?" "What if I am blundering along in the wrong path?" Granted that some people are misfits, and that their first duty is to find the work they can do easily and well. It is only fair to add that our modern world is full of men and women who—actually in the right place as far as their friends can see—make themselves wretched by debating vanished alternatives and reconsidering old choices. What is the net result of their continued self-analysis? These men and women never find an answer to their harrowing questions. They merely suc-

ceed in unfitting themselves to grapple with a world which, when all is said, demands self-confidence in us all.

Suppose, now, you look at your own major choices in the light of common sense. Ever since you began to make decisions you have tried to do the right thing. Could God ask anything more? If He does guide men and women when they do their best, He must certainly have guided you. The work you are doing today, unimpressive as it is, must be God's will for you. And no matter how much you would enjoy trying another career, there is no possibility that you can do so. A dozen responsibilities hold you in your present position with ties that cannot honorably be broken. God's will or not, this work is the work you must do. Would God ask you to undertake a different career when it is obviously impossible for you to do so? Even if this present career were not God's first choice for your life, He certainly can be trusted to create in it opportunities for you. Even a second-best life-work may become, in God's providence

and with His help, amazingly significant and useful. You want to make the most of your ordinary abilities? Put more thought into the work you are doing. Teach yourself to make your hardest effort when the tide is running against you. Save the priceless inner energy that other people waste in anger and irritation. Believe in yourself and in the work you are doing. Through patient and heroic disciplines like these the man with one or two talents can finally make himself the practical equal of the man with five. "The patient dedication of the will counts more than natural ability, and capacity flows more often from desire than desire flows from capacity."

Chapter III

ADJUSTING TO UNWELCOME LIMITATIONS

I

Here is one of the commonest and yet one of the most difficult problems in human life. In one form or another, or at one time or another, it makes its appearance in every home and every career. Consider the situation described in a letter like this:

> I have just put off my head-set after listening to your sermon over the radio. I am an elderly school teacher, and for years I held an important position in one of the famous High Schools of this State. But two years ago I became deaf, and then I was speedily thrown out on the economic scrap-heap. Thinking I would find some solace in Nature, I moved away from the city and settled in this country

> community. But just as I got busy with my garden, one of my legs was paralyzed. That put an end to my outdoor life. Few people can guess the mental anguish I have endured during these past few months. Frankly, I have given up faith in the justice of God.

What was the problem this man was grappling with? The problem of adjusting to unwelcome limitations.

In some cases this problem is created by our own blunders and misdeeds. We all know men and women who are now beset with poverty and hardship for the simple reason that they squandered recklessly the wealth and the opportunities that were once theirs. These people suffer bitterly at their change of fortune, but they cannot say that life is treating them unfairly. Life is merely forcing them to pay the heavy price of their own blunders. There are, however, men and women whose limitations cannot be explained or justified in this simple manner. The elderly school teacher whose letter we were just reading was, obvi-

ously, not to blame for either his deafness or his paralysis. Similarly many of the men and women who have missed the supreme joys of life—marriage and parenthood—seem in no way to blame for their misfortune. We can only say that they are victims of circumstance. One of our modern poets has brought this point out clearly in a verse of almost photographic vividness. A woman who had been strangely cheated out of a home and children is speaking:

> I mind me it was this very room,
> I was making bread at the table there.
> "It's a fine wife you'd make," he said. . . .
> Then she came by with her curly hair.
> Queer how life goes! Why I might have
> A man, and a brood of boys and girls,
> If she had only made the bread,
> And I had had the yellow curls![1]

II

How do people meet these unwelcome limitations? Some men and women, suddenly frustrated in a dominant desire, lose their self-control completely. Blocked at one point, they

[1] Virginia L. Tunstall.

burst out at another in wild rebellion against life and all its conventions. Drink, drugs, the mad pursuit of pleasure, a studied violation of the accepted moral code—all these pitiful forms of revolt are familiar to those who have the chance to study human nature. Other men and women, suddenly brought face to face with a blank wall, react in a wholly different way. They lapse into fatal introspection and deepening bitterness. Why has life treated them so unfairly? Why do they get so little when they deserve so much? These are the people whose view of the world and of themselves finally becomes so distorted that they create almost insoluble problems for those who are unfortunately compelled to live and work with them.

Still another group of people, possibly the most familiar of all, meets the hard situation in a third way. These men and women display a stoical indifference to pain, strive to bear their frustration and defeat without wincing. "Grin and bear it" is the advice they give to others in a similar plight. As far as one can tell, it is this stoical attitude which is most

frequently recommended to the young people of our time. Over and over we find parents and teachers saying, "You will, of course, meet your share of misfortunes. When they come you must not lose your self-control or your ideals. You certainly must not permit yourself to grow morbid and bitter. Rather you must show yourself a soldier, display a Spartan indifference to pain. Never wince, no matter how the disappointments hurt. Never surrender, no matter how heavy the odds are against you." This seems to be the philosophy of life which is most clearly understood and widely accepted today.

Does a true follower of Jesus have a different attitude toward the unwelcome limitations of life? Some of us think he has. The stoical attitude toward pain was certainly familiar long before Jesus came into the world. His way of life included a new solution of this old problem.

III

A Christian begins by recognizing several obvious facts. One is that limitations come

upon us all. A moment ago we were reading the unhappy words of a woman who had been deprived of a home and children of her own. But, after all, she was not the only woman in her community who found life a disappointment. Here is the companion-piece of the poem we were just reading:

> A single woman's a lonesome thing,
> Often I'm lonely day and night;
> I miss, when the world's on fire with Spring,
> Another face in the candle-light.
> And yet when I see some lad I knew
> With a wife who's tired to death of him,
> I know that dreams that never come true
> Are better than dreams all broken and dim.[2]

There are hundreds of people in our modern world whose inner problem would be speedily solved if they would recognize this simple fact. They are not the only individuals in their circle who face unwelcome limitations. Their life, hard as it is, is no harder than hundreds of other lives. Some blank wall of frustration confronts every one of us. Think of Jesus'

[2] Virginia L. Tunstall.

experience, His bewildered prayer in Gethsemane. "Let this cup pass from me!" But that prayer was never answered. Even Jesus did not have His own way.

A second fact we recognize as we encounter the limitations of life is this. No one can fully explain why these hardships come upon us. There are, of course, occasional situations in which pain and disappointment are the direct and justifiable result of our own misdeeds. But in other cases no such easy explanation of suffering is at hand. Some months ago a bewildered old man submitted this question to one of our foremost religious leaders: "I am seventy-four years of age. I find myself utterly unable to answer the following question. Can you answer it for me? In 1895 my wife, stricken with melancholia, took her own life. In 1901 my eldest son died of a fever. In 1920 my eldest daughter, temporarily out of her mind with acute depression, shot herself. In 1924 my only living son and

his two small children were burned to death in their own home. My question about life can be summed up in one word—Why?" But no one can answer that question. Almost the last words Jesus uttered were, "My God, why?" Even for Him no answer came. No answer has ever come for us.

Face to face with this situation, what do we as Christians do? We prepare to endure, as best we can, our share of the world's pain—and endure it without understanding the reason for its presence. We cease torturing our minds with the attempt to answer a riddle that has never been answered, and we cease breaking our hearts with the old and utterly false notion that pain represents God's punishment for undetected sin. "Now we see through a glass darkly"—there is our confession of limited knowledge, made as frankly today as it was made centuries ago by Paul. What happens when a man admits he cannot explain these tragic situations, and begins to accept them quietly and without resentment? There

steals into his heart the peace that Jesus knew, the peace that the world can neither give nor take away.

A third fact we Christians recognize is this. Though everyone has his limitations, and though no one can explain them fully, thousands of people rise triumphant above them. The problem of pain may be insoluble in theory, but it is solved in practice every hour of the day. Ole Bull, the great violinist of the last generation, was once playing in Munich. He had just reached the most difficult passage in his concerto when his A-string snapped. He hesitated for a fraction of a second, then caught the rhythm again, and finished the enormously difficult passage on three strings. What a picture of the victory thousands of men and women are winning every day! In Dr. Fosdick's vivid phrase, "They get music out of life's remainders." You say that your latest limitation dooms you to defeat? Nothing of the kind! Even if the blank walls are rising about you there is some way out of that

prison. Even if the violinist's A-string does break, the concerto can be finished . . . somehow. That is the triumphant story of human life.

Suppose a man is too old or too weak to win this outward victory. What then? Jesus never won outward triumph. The cross finally claimed Him, a beaten man. But even before the glory of Easter, men heard the victorious cry of One who had already gained inner triumph over suffering: "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." Granted that we may never be fortunate enough to twist our defeats into victories before the world's astonished gaze. We can still gain an inner victory over disaster. One of Maude Royden's recent books gives a graphic account of such a spiritual triumph:

> A few years ago Sir Frederic Treves, the great English physician, was walking through one of the worst slums of London. He saw a strange sign in a tenement window—the announcement that for a

shilling anyone could come in and see the most deformed human being in the world, the so-called Elephant Man. Sir Frederic entered, a curtain was drawn, and there on the floor was an almost shapeless mass of human flesh. The man's deformities were so ghastly that even this physician could scarcely bear to look at them. In sudden pity Sir Frederic dropped his card into the Elephant Man's misshapen hands, and hurried away to report to the police. The authorities immediately put a stop to the exhibition, but the man who had this poor creature in his power spirited him away and attempted to show him in Belgium. The Belgian police interfered, and then with heartless cruelty the exhibitor put the Elephant Man on board ship for London and promptly made his own escape. Somehow or other the deformed man reached London and tried to hide in the railroad station. The police discovered him of course, and then finding Sir

> Frederic's card in his possession called the physician on the phone. For the next three years the Elephant Man lived in utter seclusion in Sir Frederic's London establishment. On examination it was found that his mind was wholly normal, and his intelligence well above the average. The torture he must have undergone in those years of exhibition before peering and perverted human beings can hardly be imagined. Finally, at the age of twenty-six, the Elephant Man died. What had life held for him? Not one of the things that make the rest of us happy. No work, no ability, no sense of value, no wife or child or friend. Yet in those last three years this poor creature told Sir Frederic that he was happy every hour of the day.[3]

Outward defeat . . . inner victory!

There is a fourth fact we Christians recognize as we meet the limitations of life. There

[3] Maude Royden, *Life's Little Pitfalls.*

are some men and women whose personalities are actually enriched by suffering and defeat. Here is more than conquest of circumstance. Here the soldier himself, whether outwardly victorious or not, emerges from his battles finer and stronger than he was when they began. It is not often that we see this ennoblement of personality as a result of conflict with disaster. In most cases men and women are restricted, embittered, warped, and weakened by intense suffering. But here and there this supreme transformation takes place, and human hearts are actually enriched by hardship and defeat. All of us have known individuals of whom this was true. Who can measure the courage and inspiration they bring to those about them?

A bird came hopping to my shelf
With one good foot, a stump the other.
It hurt my heart to see so maimed
A feathered brother.

Yet when he spread his wings to go
He seemed to launch himself with laughter,
As though to mock my sorry thoughts
That fluttered after.

For though he could not perch so well,
Nor strut nor swagger any longer,
His wings were strong as any bird's,
Yes, maybe stronger.[4]

IV

But a follower of Jesus does more than point out these four rather obvious facts. He goes on to accept as true two great convictions which have come down from the Christian past. One is the conviction that there are times when the limitations of life represent God's effort to guide and help us.

Notice that we say there are times when this is true. Obviously it is not true in every case. The deformities of the Elephant Man, for example, must have been frustrations rather than fulfilments of God's desire. We can no longer believe that pitiful creatures of this type were deliberately created by God "for His own glory." When in our modern world we meet situations like this we have the firm conviction that they must be corrected, and that as we struggle to correct them God works in us and

[4] Karle W. Baker.

through us. No man who has caught the spirit of the modern age can feel for a moment that all the limitations that beset us are God's desire.

Yet there are some limitations that seem to be walls of guidance rather than walls of defeat. Consider a career like Paul's. Just as Paul arrived at his period of greatest influence and effectiveness, he found himself a prisoner in Rome. To contemporary observers, and probably to Paul himself, that experience must have seemed a tragic frustration. Why should Paul be chained in Rome when there was so much work for him all over the Mediterranean world? But look again at that situation. Study it in the perspective of the years. The fetters that bound Paul away from the distant churches he loved bound him to the task of writing them letters. Centuries ago the last of Paul's spoken words faded and was forgotten, but those written words—treasured here and there all over the Empire—came down to change the life of the generations. Was it bad luck that held Paul a prisoner in

Rome, or was it the wise purpose of Someone who knew that the time had come for letters to supplant soon-forgotten interviews? Was Paul the victim of misfortune, or was he—as he so often called himself—"the prisoner of Jesus Christ"?

In every community today you will find people who have had an essentially similar experience. They may not discuss it with others, and they certainly would never think of baring their inmost convictions for the sake of furnishing data for a theological debate. But deep in their hearts is the firm conviction that Someone wiser than they are has had a hand in their careers, that they were intentionally encouraged here and thwarted there, and that some of the best things that happened to them came not only without their own effort but directly in spite of it.

Lord, for the erring will
Betrayed and baffled still,
For the blundering thought
Not into action wrought,
For ignorant hopes that were
Blasted in spite of prayer,

For pain and sorrow sent
Bringing ennoblement,
For the heart from itself kept—
Our thanksgiving accept![5]

Sooner or later most of us find that prayer upon our lips. We discover that the blank walls rising about us are walls of guidance and not of limitation. They were built by love, not by bad luck.

V

The other conviction we Christians accept is this. We believe, as Jesus obviously believed, that death is not the end of a human career. Before each one of us opens an existence which is, in the exact and literal sense of the word, endless.

Once a man thinks of life in these terms the aspect of his present existence changes significantly. That longer vista and that altered perspective transform the outline and contour of immediate experience. Suppose a college student sets his heart on winning certain honors and offices in his senior year. Through his first

[5] William Dean Howells.

three years in college he works heroically with those ends in view. At last the day comes when his dreams are to come true, but to his chagrin every honor he hoped to win and every office he hoped to gain are given to someone else. Everything lost . . . his college course an utter failure! If that boy is foolish enough to regard his four undergraduate years as the be-all and the end-all of life, and Commencement as the terminus of his career, he will give up in despair. Why go on living and working when there is nothing left to struggle for? But if that boy has a true perspective on life, if he sees that college is only a phase of his experience, and Commencement the beginning and not the end of his career, then he will do what thousands of disappointed seniors do every year. He will smile at his defeats, learn what he can from them, and make a quiet appeal to the long years ahead. Some day—thirty, forty, fifty years hence—his classmates will see what he can do. He will gain success then, even if he cannot gain it now. You want to find new courage for your struggle with limi-

tations and disappointments? Begin to think of this life as Jesus did. Count it the beginning, not the end. These defeats are not the final chapter in your career. There are innumerable chapters yet to be written, here and in the eternity beyond. God has just begun His work with you and with those you love. The opportunities here are only the first of those He has in store.

Passing from storm and tempest into calm,
Taking a hand and discovering it God's hand,
Stepping on shore and finding it heaven,
Seeing new tasks and feeling new strength for them,
Facing new joys and knowing they will be endless,
Waking at last and—dearest—meeting you!

Chapter IV

IMPROVING ONE'S SELF-CONTROL

I

During Dr. Grenfell's student days he did volunteer work in one of the settlement houses of London. He tells this incident from that period:

> One poor creature who came to us in the last stages of poverty and dirt proved to be an honors man from Oxford. He assured us that he intended to begin a new life, and we agreed to help him. We took him to a temperance lodging, and provided a bed, a bath, and a supper. We also purchased a good outfit of second-hand clothing for him. We did not give him any money, or even leave his old clothes with him, for fear that his appetite for liquor would be uncontrollable. But the next morning when we went to find him he was gone. We searched the

> saloons of the neighborhood and soon got track of him. Someone in the lodging, with mistaken kindness, had given him sixpence. As soon as the coin was in his hand he started helplessly for the nearest bar. When he arrived there he was shaking so that he could not lift a glass to his mouth, so the barkeeper kindly poured the liquor down his throat. We never saw him or heard from him again.[1]

What was the essential problem in that young man's life? The problem of self-control. His inability to master himself was bringing on utter ruin.

This problem is not limited to drunkards and the poor creatures of the slums. It concerns us all, and concerns us deeply. If you will look back over your own life you will be surprised to find how much of its pain and unhappiness, its sorrow and its sin, can be traced directly or indirectly to your defective self-control. Why have you been the victim of so many moods of depression? You knew well enough

[1] W. T. Grenfell, *A Labrador Doctor.*

that it was wrong to lapse into fear and melancholy, and make life so hard for those about you. Yet time and again you yielded. Why? You did not have the power to master yourself. Or think of the unhappiness you have brought into your home, the hearts broken by cruelty and the friendships wrecked by outbursts of temper. The reason for all that trouble is obvious. You did not have yourself firmly under control.

You looked at me with eyes grown bright with pain
Like some trapped creature's. Then you moved your head
Slowly from side to side as though the strain
Ached in your throat with anger and with dread.

Then you turned and left me, and I stood
With a queer sense of deadness over me.
I wondered dully how you could
Fasten your trench-coat up so carefully.

Then you were gone . . . and all the air was quick
With my harsh words that seemed to leap and quiver,
And in my heart I heard the little click
Of a door that closes—quietly, forever.[2]

How many of us can recall scenes like that!

[2] Eunice Tietjens.

II

Can a man improve his self-control? The moment we ask that question someone—usually a person with a rather theoretical approach to life—is sure to raise a familiar protest. "Why waste time in such a discussion?" he asks petulantly. "Human beings have no freedom of choice, no power to change or even manage themselves. What we call will-power is an illusion. The actual fact is that men and women respond to situations in purely mechanical ways, reacting as helplessly to the influences from without and the stimuli from within as the mercury in a thermometer expands or contracts in accordance with the shift in temperature. Each one of us has a given inheritance and a given environment. These two forces, each beyond our control, combine in complex ways to determine the pressure exerted upon us, and through that pressure to determine the course we will inevitably follow. The honors man from Oxford who drank himself to death? But he was helpless in the face of circumstance. An evil inheritance and a

dangerous environment combined to push him to ruin. Similarly the combination of our inherited traits and the unfortunate situations in which we repeatedly find ourselves often proves too much for us. We yield helplessly to this overwhelming pressure, giving way to moods of depression, outbursts of anger, or occasional vicious acts. But why hold us responsible? Why talk about increasing our self-control? In the last analysis we are as helpless, as incapable of self-development and change, as the beams beneath a heavy building. As long as the load stays within certain well-defined limits, no disaster occurs. But let the pressure become an ounce too great, and the timbers begin to crack. Let the pressure of inheritance and environment become too great for us, and we give way too." Here is a familiar argument. Is there any answer to it?

Years ago William James formulated an answer which, however vigorously it may be attacked by consistent fatalists, has been immensely helpful to people with a less theoretical approach to life and its problems. Pro-

fessor James pointed out that a stream of thoughts, ideas, purposes, and sensations is forever flowing through the mind. You and I apparently have the power to pick one thought or purpose from that motley throng and hold it rigidly before the attention. When we do, that particular thought rather than any other tends to translate itself, quite automatically, into action. Thus through our power to determine the content of our attention we gain control over the acts that follow mechanically. Here is Professor James' illustration of his theory:

> A drunkard is debating with himself whether or not to take one more glass. What a stream of ideas and excuses flows through his befuddled brain! This is a new brand of whiskey, and as a connoisseur in such matters he really ought to know what it tastes like. It is already poured out in the glass, and he has no right to waste it. Other people are drinking, and it would seem churlish to refuse. Or this last drink will help him withstand

the cold, or give him energy to get home, or enable him to make a new and stronger resolution to stay sober. But somewhere in the background of his mind there is an uncomfortable notion that will not down. Taking this next drink means being a drunkard—nothing less. If this poor fellow can bring that uncomfortable idea to the center of his attention and resolutely hold it there, crowding aside all the more congenial ideas that would like to fill the stage, then the chances are that this uncomfortable idea will gradually translate itself into action. It will make him pull his hand away from that fatal glass, and keep him sober. The mental effort by which we keep a particular idea unwaveringly before the attention is the free act which gives us control over ourselves and our destiny.[3]

The application of that theory to your problem of self-control is obvious. The next time you find yourself growing angry, for example,

[3] William James, *Psychology.*

you will discover a flood of justifications and excuses sweeping through your mind. Why not give way to temper? That other person deserves the verbal lashing you propose to give. But somewhere in the background of your thought will stand the arresting realization that giving way to temper means moral failure, nothing else. Seize that saving thought! Hold it resolutely before your attention! Presently it will translate itself into action and save you from an outburst that you will later recall with infinite regret. You say it is hard to manage the mind in this way? But no one ever claimed that self-control is easy! Even the best people have a desperate struggle with themselves. Dwight L. Moody spoke for all of us when he confessed, "I have had more trouble with myself than with any other person I ever knew."

III

Suppose you are ready to take up this long, hard battle for self-mastery. How should you go about it? What immediate and practical things can you do to improve your self-control?

You might well begin by trying to keep yourself more thoroughly rested—physically, nervously, mentally. One of the most human stories in the Old Testament is the account of Elijah's mood of despair as he sat under the juniper tree in the wilderness. "It is enough," he cries dejectedly. "Now, O Lord, take away my life." But Elijah did not really want to die. He had momentarily lost his self-control —that was all. The reason for this loss of self-control is plain. See the implications of the earlier portions of the narrative: "Elijah rose and fled for his life, and came to Beer-sheba. He left his servant there, and went another day's journey into the wilderness. *Then* he requested for himself that he might die. . . ." The fact was that the long journey on foot, plus the harrowing fear of capture, had left Elijah worn out. It was in those moments of physical and nervous exhaustion that his self-control gave way. As soon as Elijah was rested, his normal spirits and his normal ability to grapple with circumstance returned.

A similar situation reveals itself repeatedly in human lives today. It is in hours of nervous and physical weariness that our self-control falters. Outbursts of ungovernable temper have a familiar habit of coming after a succession of sleepless nights. Moods of despair almost invariably follow a period of special strain. The times when we are desperately hard to live with are the times when our strength has been too heavily depleted by disappointment, tension, or suffering. If we are really in earnest about improving our self-control, here is a place at which we can immediately set to work. When we realize, from a dozen secret and familiar symptoms, that we are nearing the end of our resources, then we must resolutely drop our work and give our tiring body and nerves at least a few moments' rest. That simple practice, built into a habit, will do more than we dream to solve our problem of self-control.

Mental rest is, of course, quite as important as physical rest. There are scores of short-tempered and crotchety individuals whose

difficulties are certainly not traceable to physical overwork. As a matter of fact they do little or nothing to exhaust their bodily strength. Their difficulties root themselves rather in a mind which is never given a chance to relax, and which naturally and finally rebels. An English nerve-specialist writes:

> One of the most helpful habits any one of us can acquire is the habit of resting the mind as well as the body. Look at the typical patient who is suffering from nervous breakdown. He complains of extreme fatigue, but he also reports a long list of secondary symptoms. He cannot stand noises. He is childishly irritable. He must not be disturbed or interrupted, and he flies into a passion if his desires are crossed in the slightest. Strangest of all, he is in a state of perpetual motion. He says he must always be "on the go." What do these symptoms reveal? They reveal a mind which has not been allowed to rest, and which is now fatigued and thoroughly out of control. Tell such a

> man to relax during the afternoon, and the chances are that he will try to read a paper while he is lying down. Tell him to go to bed early, and he will take a novel with him and insist on staying awake half the night in the foolish determination to finish it. Such a man may give his body plenty of rest, but he has never learned to give his mind the perfect quiet it occasionally needs. He is forever whipping it into renewed activity, and then wondering why life grows harder and harder.[1]

Do those words describe your case? Then begin today giving your mind as well as your body its due share of rest. How can you do that? Go to some place of quietness and beauty, perhaps a church or a lovely spot in nature, and there empty your mind of all its confusions and cares. If such a complete escape from the world is impossible, go to your own room, shut yourself in, and make yourself stop thinking and worrying. If even

[1] J. A. Hadfield, *The Psychology of Power.*

that escape is beyond your reach, try to gain a few moments of inner peace right where you are. Turn your thought from your own weariness and exhaustion to the greatness and the peace of God. Begin to think of His power, His love, His undoubted ability to care for you. "They that *wait on the Lord* shall renew their strength." Centuries ago people as tired and bewildered as you are found this path to the new life of power.

In the castle of my soul there is a little postern gate
Where, when I enter, I am in the presence of God.
In a moment, in the turning of a thought,
I am where God is.
When I meet God there all life gains a new meaning,
Small things become great, and great things small,
Lowly and despised things are shot through with glory,
My troubles seem but the pebbles on the road,
My joys seem like the everlasting hills,
All my fever is gone in the great peace of God,
And I pass through the door from Time into Eternity.[5]

IV

A second suggestion we might well bear in mind is this. We must learn to recognize our

[5] Walter Rauschenbush.

own danger signals, and when we see them watch ourselves with special care.

One of the whaling captains of New Bedford tells a curious story of an adventure he had years ago when cruising off the coast of China. It was a hot and sultry afternoon, and the ship stood almost motionless in the glassy sea. Most of the sailors were dozing, and the captain himself nodded more than once as he sat beside the idle wheel. In one of his more wakeful moments he saw three thistle seeds drifting quietly past him, not three feet from his face. He began to nod again, and then a disturbing thought stirred somewhere in his mind. His ship was many miles from land—how could those bits of thistle-down travel so far out to sea? What had kept them from falling into the water? Then the meaning of those tiny danger signals dawned upon him. He woke with a start, shouted to the crew to take in every shred of canvas, and do it at top speed. Twenty minutes later the ship was in the midst of one of the worst typhoons that ever swept that sea. The thistle seeds—swept far from

land by the terrific wind—had brought their warning just in time.

Storms of bad temper and depression usually reveal their approach by signals as trivial but as significant as those bits of thistledown. One such danger signal is the sudden feeling of inadequacy. The next time that feeling comes over you, and you find yourself saying that no matter how hard you work you can never get your work done, then guard yourself with special care. That sense of inadequacy is a danger signal, an indication that you are more tired than you realize. It is in such hours of weariness that self-control becomes a serious problem. Another danger signal is a sudden inability to make decisions. When you find yourself bewildered, perplexed, unable to make up your mind about anything, then watch yourself with double care. Your nervous resilience has begun to give way, and your self-mastery is likely to break down too.

The most curious danger signal of all is the sudden impulse to start quarrelling. All of us have this feeling at times. We find ourselves

writing imaginary letters full of indignation and bluster, concocting tentative speeches full of criticism and rebuke, even imagining how it would feel to let our fists and our feet fly against some individual we particularly dislike. What do these strange feelings mean? They mean, as any physiologist will explain, that our nerves and body are tired out, and that they are trying to get from the internal glands the stimulating fluids that are poured into the blood in time of battle. As long as there is no real fight on, the body and the nerves persuade the mind to imagine one, and thus compel the glands to give their quick stimulus. You are in earnest about improving your self-control? Watch for your own danger signals, and then profit by them.

Of course there are entire situations as well as stray feelings that may serve as warnings. It is interesting to note, for example, that any period of emotional stress is almost invariably followed by a period of lowered self-control. The explanation is simple. Any sustained emotion exhausts us, and it is in states of

exhaustion that we fall victim to impulses we are usually strong enough to manage. As the psychologists put it, "Our inhibitions are weakest after an emotional experience." One of our social workers gives this example:

> One Fourth of July a friend of mine was returning to the city after a day at the seashore. Beside him in the train sat a young fellow who looked as though he might be a high-class machinist. He was a sturdy, self-respecting type—not at all the kind of person who would air his private troubles to a stranger. The two men exchanged a few words, but for the final fifteen minutes of the trip sat in silence. When the train reached its destination and my friend started down the platform, this young fellow approached him with pitiful eagerness. "I'm feeling mighty blue tonight," he exclaimed. "I've just said goodbye to the best friend I have on earth." There was a commonplace rejoinder of sympathy, but the young man continued doggedly. "I'm as much

> in love with her now as I was the day we were married." Then he began to pour out his story, and for more than an hour in that crowded waiting-room he told the most intimate details of his life to a man who was a complete stranger. It was a curious illustration of one of the often overlooked facts about human nature—that our self-control is dangerously weak after any highly emotional experience.[6]

You have seen how true that is in the case of other people. You have watched them give way completely under the stress of great sorrow, great victory, or even great excitement. Why not profit by their unfortunate exhibitions? Why not plan to double your guard over yourself every time a period of emotional stress arises?

V

A final suggestion is this. If you want to improve your self-control, gain some new and more powerful purpose for your life. Those

[6] Karl de Schweinitz, *The Art of Helping People Out of Trouble.*

of us who deal constantly with broken or defeated personalities find again and again that one of the greatest services we can render these people is to waken within them a new aim, a fresh and a dominant ambition. Once a new dynamic is put within their hearts many baffling conduct-problems solve themselves.

One of the social workers of Philadelphia recently reported a typical case:

> Mrs. Quinn loved her six children dearly, yet in spite of their need and our appeals she neglected them shamefully. Their clothing was never clean, and the Quinn tenement was as dirty as the Quinn youngsters. Worse still, Mrs. Quinn was teaching the children, both directly and by example, to be as untruthful as she was. What could be done to correct that unhappy situation? One day Mrs. Quinn came to us with the surprising news that she had given up her tenement, and had hired two furnished rooms in which to live. The truth of the matter was that she was hopelessly behind on her payments

for the furniture, and the installment company had finally carted it away. We realized that this was our chance to put a real purpose into Mrs. Quinn's aimless life. We explained to her that a family of seven could not possibly live in two rooms, and that therefore it would be necessary for us to take three of the children and put them in an institution until their mother showed she could give them the care and training they needed. So three of the children were put in a Home, and poor Mrs. Quinn was heartbroken. But when she saw that we were really in earnest, and that she could not have the children back until she proved she deserved them, then she began to change amazingly. Within a fortnight everything in her two rooms, on the remaining three children, and on Mrs. Quinn herself was spotlessly clean. Then she made a heroic effort to break her old habit of lying, and began to teach the children to stick invariably to the truth. At the end

> of three months we began giving the missing children back one by one. By the time the family was reunited Mrs. Quinn actually loved to be clean, and she had come to see that it is possible to tell the truth and still be happy.[7]

A new and powerful purpose thrust into an aimless life . . . and see the transformation that followed!

That principle has an undoubted application to many of the well-to-do people of today. In the last analysis their defective self-control is not traceable to either nervous or physical overstrain. These men and women are living highly sheltered and carefully protected lives, and they have few real problems to face or few real burdens to bear. But in their essentially purposeless existence, in their elegant idleness and ease, a dozen petty behavior problems arise which would vanish automatically if these people were suddenly given some real aim in life, some real goal to struggle toward. Dr. Grenfell gives a striking case:

[7] Karl de Schweinitz, *op. cit.*

In the early days of our mission among the Labrador fishermen, someone in England organized the Fisher Lads Letter Writing Association. The members took the names of so many orphan British boys at sea and agreed to write them regularly. Sometimes these letters did more for those who wrote them than for those who received them. I remember in particular one elderly lady whose sole concern for years had been her own feelings and the state of her own health. She had enjoyed semi-invalidism for so long that it seemed unlikely she would ever be a normal personality again. Through constant use of the most refined stimulants she succeeded in postponing that final illness which would have been a merciful relief to her long-suffering relatives. Joining our Letter Writing Association did wonders for this woman. The doctors were forgotten, the stimulants were tabooed, and all the insignia of invalidism were banished one by one. Best of all, this woman

began to be an asset rather than a liability in her own home. One day to my astonishment I saw her at a British fishing-port, surrounded by a bevy of blue-jerseyed lads just off shipboard. They were some of the sailors to whom she had been writing. In thinking about them and living for them she had literally saved herself.[8]

What is that incident but a modern illustration of a principle which Jesus formulated centuries ago? "He that saveth his life shall lose it. He that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." The problem of self-control can be solved. Jesus found one of the surest ways.

[8] W. T. Grenfell, *A Labrador Doctor.*

Chapter V

MEETING AND SOLVING NEW PROBLEMS

I

Some fifty years ago a Michigan farmer and his small son were driving along a country road toward Detroit. Eight miles from the town they saw a strange sight ahead. A steam "road-engine" was making its way slowly over the innumerable ruts and hummocks of the road. The boy begged his father to pull up the horses and let him watch the engine puff by. That was the beginning of a lifelong interest in such devices. At the age of seventeen this boy went to work in Detroit as a machinist's apprentice, and by the time he was twenty he had devised a road-engine of his own that was a great improvement over the earlier types. The only trouble was that no one—not even the inventor—enjoyed sitting so close to a high-pressure steam boiler.

Eventually this boy became one of the cleverest machinists in Detroit, and mechanical problems from all over the town were referred to him for solution. One of these problems brought him the opportunity of his life. Someone in that section had imported from England an internal-combustion engine which ran by illuminating gas. The engine broke down, and this young machinist was asked to repair it. While he was tinkering with it a new idea flashed into his mind. Would it not be possible to build an internal-combustion engine which would run by gasoline vapor rather than by either steam or illuminating gas? That would do away with high-pressure boilers and huge tanks of compressed gas. For two years this young man grappled with his problem, and then one day he told his friends he had a queer toy to show them. Queer it certainly was. A tiny engine with a single cylinder, and a piston making a three-inch stroke. But that engine used gasoline vapor for its motive power, and it would splutter along indefinitely if the gasoline tank were kept full. That toy

was eventually given away, and now has disappeared completely. The Ford Company would pay a large sum for it, for the young machinist was Henry Ford and this was his first gasoline engine. Like innumerable inventors before and since, he had faced and finally solved a new problem. Who can measure what his achievement has done for mankind?

II

Inventors are not the only ones who face new problems. Sooner or later all of us are called upon to grapple with them. One of the keenest tests of a man's character is his ability to meet new and baffling situations and prove himself master of them. Think of the new problems that emerge in sequence in the life of modern boys and girls. At twelve or fourteen a boy goes away to summer camp or boarding-school, and suddenly finds himself face to face with wholly new difficulties. Hitherto he has been the rather obvious center of interest in his own home. Now he must learn to make a place for himself in a group

that seems to take little interest in him and his affairs. How many of us found those first few weeks away from home some of the hardest in life!

At eighteen many boys and girls make the change from a school to a college environment, and once again a new situation thrusts its heavy demands upon them. They must learn to study in a new way, manage their own time and strength and money, listen to several different views of the same subject and then quietly make their own choice between them. Those of us who have to deal with numbers of college freshmen year after year realize how bewildering this new situation is for boys and girls still in adolescence.

The hardest set of new situations, however, seems to arise when two young people begin to build a home together. How strange and confusing everything is, particularly after the children come! One young mother writes, "It looks to me as though my household could run on its own momentum for perhaps four hours. After that everything, from the baby

to the vacuum-cleaner and the cook, sits down to await my return. And how the music starts when I open the front door!" Another young mother with slightly longer experience makes this confession: "After nine years of married life what are the chief assets my husband and I have accumulated? Two dirty, noisy young Americans, and a profound faith in guardian angels. Never try to pass off on us your modern theory that there are no such beings! If there were no guardian angels, our two youngsters would never have survived the abysmal ignorance of their own parents." Meeting and solving new problems? This is no imaginary situation. In one form or another it confronts all the young people we know.

Do older people ever have to meet new situations? Sometimes the hardest adjustments of a whole lifetime come at the very end of a career. Business failure, the onset of a distressing disease, the loss of those on whom elderly people had counted most—all these tragedies are familiar. William Vaughan Moody described in unforgettable lines this

situation as it was suddenly forced on his home. Holding a daguerreotype of his mother in his hand he says:

> This then is she,
> My mother as she looked at seventeen
> When first she met my father. Young incredibly,
> Younger than Spring, without the faintest trace
> Of disappointment, weariness, or tean
> Upon the childlike earnestness and grace
> Of the waiting face. . . .
> God, how Thy ways are strange!
> That this should be, even this,
> The patient head
> Which suffered years ago the dreary change!
> That these so dewy lips should be the same
> As those I stooped to kiss
> And hear my harrowing, half-spoken name
> A little ere the one who bowed above her,
> Our father and her very constant lover,
> Rose stoical . . . and we knew that she was dead.

Meeting new problems—how often and how insistently life forces this hard discipline upon us all!

III

How can we manage these new situations as they arise? We might remember, first of all, what our instinctive reaction toward

new problems is, and then make allowances for it.

The Book of Acts contains a story which many of us would do well to study. The early church had begun to outgrow its original Jewish environment and attract numbers of Gentiles. More and more clearly the essential problem of primitive Christianity emerged. What attitude should Jewish Christians take toward the new Gentile converts and their way of living? The story of Peter's struggle with this problem is told in picturesque and semi-legendary form in the Book of Acts. One day, according to this story, he saw a sheet lowered from the sky with all sorts of animals inside. According to Jewish dietary laws some of these creatures were edible and some were decidedly not. Then Peter heard the strange command, "Arise, slay and eat." Instantly came his instinctive reply, "Not so, Lord! I never have. . . ." Peter had never done such a thing before, and instinctively he concluded he never could. Eat what Gentiles ate? Share their habits, attitudes, way of life?

"Not so . . . I never have . . . therefore I never can."

All through history men have shown this attitude of hesitancy, self-distrust, and even alarm when confronted with new situations, new duties, and new facts. When, a century ago, George Stephenson announced that he would presently build a locomotive capable of traveling forty miles an hour, scores of people protested. Even if the locomotive could travel at that rate (and every sensible man knew that was impossible), no human being could move through space at that speed and stay alive. When, some decades later, scientists proposed laying a telegraph cable under the Atlantic, a certain Professor Lovering "demonstrated mathematically" that a message could never be sent so far under water. When the cowboy Jim Bridger, the first white man to penetrate what is now Yellowstone Park, returned to civilization with his astonishing tales of great geysers, mud volcanoes, and boiling springs, people laughed him to scorn. To the day of his death he was known as "the biggest liar

west of the Missouri." See such sights as Bridger described? Not much! "I never have . . . therefore I never can."

If this has been your attitude toward your own new situation, look now at the actual record of human life and achievement. Men have done the impossible, done it over and over again. The gasoline engine which was derided by skeptics finally begins to sputter and then run smoothly. The boy who thought he could never live through his first summer at camp, or through his first year at college, does survive both ordeals. The family that gave up in despair when bereavement and poverty made a joint attack finally discovers ways to go on living, and live happily too. And people with intimate personal problems? Listen to this chapter from Dr. Fosdick's pastoral experience.

> Some time ago a young man came to me to say that he had always made a desperate failure of everything. He had evidently had a bad inferiority-complex since childhood. His father used to beat

him cruelly, and the humiliation of it cut deep into his boyish heart. He always thought of himself as a loser, a defeated man. He went through college, he married, and he attempted a business career. But always this awful sense of failure overshadowed him. Once he tried suicide. Finally in abject despair he came to see if I could help him. Did he need to stay in his dismal plight? Certainly not! Together we found the way out. I saw him the other night. He was living on top of the world. He had found what the Bible calls "power to become."

You think your problems are insoluble? That is only your instinctive reaction to them, a reaction you must recognize and discount. Other people have met difficulties quite as unexpected and baffling as yours. But they have found a way to master them. You can do that too.

IV

We also find help in such situations by reminding ourselves that every new problem

will—of itself—call forth new powers within us. We are not the same people in the new environment that we were in the old. Being new people, we can do new things.

School life offers innumerable illustrations of this principle. Here is an incident from the records of an Americanization class in Cincinnati:

> In 1922 a young girl of eighteen, a Russian peasant, appeared in our class. She was good-looking, but her looks were her only apparent asset. She knew no English, she had had very little education in her own country, she was practically penniless, she had no relatives in the United States, and she was pitifully ignorant of American ways. That was three years ago. You would not recognize that girl today. She now holds a fine position as a saleswoman in one of our largest and best department stores. She knows more about American styles and clothes than most of her customers do. She speaks English very well, with a

natural refinement of accent. Every time I see her and hear her talk, I listen with amazement and wonder. Only three years from those first days of utter ignorance! Next year she is planning to enter Evening High School, and now she is beginning to talk about going to college. Every month she sends money back to her old mother in Russia.

How could that immigrant girl do so much in three years? After making all allowance for her native ability and her good fortune in meeting this particular teacher, we must still recognize a third factor in her success. She was facing a new situation, and the new situation—of itself—brought out new and unsuspected powers within her. Had she stayed in peasant Russia these abilities would probably have lain dormant. Her life would have moved quietly in traditional grooves, as the life of her parents and grandparents had done. But the new America, the new problems demanding solution, the stimulus of new dangers and new opportunities—all these things evoked the

latent power within. She became a new person, and as a new person she solved her new problems.

This principle will, of course, hold true in your life. You say that unexpected changes in business have forced you to undertake a new career in middle-life, and that you are afraid of yourself and of the future? You have no real cause for anxiety. Your abilities were not exhausted in your first career. As a matter of fact many of them are not yet discovered. This new situation will reveal to you a new personality. The years after fifty will be years of self-discovery quite as truly as the years before twenty. Study history and see how many men have "found themselves" only in later life. Beethoven was playing the piano in public at the age of eight, but he was fifty-two when he wrote his greatest symphony. Gladstone was elected prime minister of England three times after his sixtieth birthday, he introduced his famous Home Rule Bill when he was seventy-seven, and he held office until he was eighty-five. William Cullen Bryant

made his translation of the *Iliad,* one of his greatest literary achievements, when he was in the seventies. Oliver Wendell Holmes, still hale and hearty after eighty, said to a friend, "It is faith in something, enthusiasm for something, that makes life worth living." Young people are not the only ones who discover power within themselves. They are certainly not the only ones who bend life and circumstance to their will.

It is this thought which has brought immense courage and help to men and women whose hearts have been crushed by sudden and inexplicable bereavement. They have sensed the fact that they could get a new start, hopeless though their situation seemed. You say that the years ahead are years of sorrow, loneliness, utter defeat? The world is full of men and women who have passed through a situation quite as bleak as yours, but who have suddenly found that they could not only make their way through the darkness but emerge again into the sunshine, braver and stronger than they ever were before. Strangely enough, it was

in the Valley of the Shadow that they found themselves, discovered their own power to become "more than conquerors."

> Defeat may serve as well as victory
> To shake the soul and let the glory out.
> When the great oak is straining in the wind
> The boughs drink in new beauty, and the trunk
> Sends down a deeper root on the windward side.
> Only the soul that knows a mighty grief
> Can know a mighty rapture. Pain may serve
> To stretch out spaces in the soul for joy.[1]

V

There is a third principle which people who are facing new problems would do well to remember. They must—at any cost in effort—keep the new rules they lay down for themselves.

Here is a young salesman who is trying to make a start with a new firm. He sees clearly the responsibilities involved in his new position. He must familiarize himself with the new line of goods he proposes to sell. He must cover his new territory as soon as may be, and make

[1] Edwin Markham.

the acquaintance of the men who are likely to be his customers. In whatever spare moments he has he must familiarize himself with the history of his new firm, its manufacturing processes, and the different uses to which its product can be put. Here are his new duties, and immediately he lays down a new set of rules for himself. He will begin his day's work half an hour earlier than in the past. He will utilize for study the time he previously gave to amusement and idle daydreams. He will resolutely grapple with himself and correct those little faults that became more and more evident in his preceding position. From the point of view of psychology, what is this young man trying to do? He is trying to substitute a new set of habits for an old one. In place of the self-indulgent and semi-energetic life of the past, he is trying to establish the self-controlled and strenuous life of the future. Now what is involved in the creation of a new set of habits?

William James once described the habit-building process in this ingenious way:

In attempting to build new habits we must always remember that we are dealing with two sets of hostile powers, one of which we propose to make dominant over the other. In such a situation it is necessary, above everything else, never to lose a battle. A single victory for the wrong side undoes the effect of a great many victories for the right one. The man who makes good resolutions every morning but never carries them heroically into effect during the day—no matter what the cost may be—is like a cross-country runner who, reaching the edge of a ditch he must jump, invariably turns back to get a better start. Without unbroken advance he will of course get nowhere. Or to change the figure of speech, every lapse we make when we are trying to build a new set of habits is like the fatal slip we make when we drop a ball of string we are trying to wind up. That one blunder undoes a great deal

more of the string than any single turn can ever re-wind."[2]

Those keen sentences suggest clearly why many people never succeed in meeting their new situations and solving their new problems. They see clearly the thing they ought to do, and they make brave resolutions to do it. But in the actual stress and strain of life, and in the face of unexpected and highly alluring temptations, their resolution weakens, their new habit stays unbuilt, and their new problem slowly proves to be (as far as they are concerned) unsolved and insoluble. These are the people who, in the vivid words of Jesus, "begin to build, but are not able to finish." They lack the all-important power to keep the rules they lay down for themselves. One of our humorists has recently published a quaint picture of such an individual:

A woman vows that she will diet
But sees fudge-cake and longs to try it,
She says she will renounce all pie
Then on it casts a hungry eye.

[2] William James, *Psychology*.

Foes, in the guise of friends, assert:
"A little bit of this won't hurt,"
And soon, where'er she takes a seat,
They bring her favorite things to eat.
So, tempted oft, her courage fails,
Up climbs the needle on her scales.
Few can the lure of food refuse:
Only the stoutest hearts can lose!

VI

A final rule that will help us all is this. Whenever you face a new situation or a new problem, keep your mind off the distant past and the distant future. The present is your only concern.

One reason why many people fail to handle new difficulties easily is that their self-control is defective at this apparently insignificant point. They let some of their thoughts scurry off into the future to canvass the possibilities of day after tomorrow. Will this new work bring them the rewards they have a right to expect? If they do their best now will the promised opportunities really emerge in the future? Or they send another detachment of their thoughts into the past to review old deci-

sions and resurrect dead alternatives. Was it a mistake to choose the career they are now following? Would they have done better to stay in the old community rather than move to the new one? Did they do wrong to marry as they did, and build the particular home they have built? People with such a divided mind can never meet new situations or solve new problems. Part of the energy they need for the actual task in hand is diverted into the fruitless channels of self-analysis, regret, and idle speculation. Such people must learn, at any cost in effort, to keep their attention off the past and the future, and hold it resolutely on the present. "Be not anxious for the tomorrow: the morrow will be anxious for itself." Jesus knew well enough the danger of a divided mind.

Right here lies one of the great benefits that come to those who accept as true Jesus' interpretation of life. What is the attitude of such people as the problems of the past or the future arise, ghostlike, to haunt them? They know that a God of love can be trusted to care for

the past. If there were sins, they were forgiven long ago. If there were mistakes, they were in the providence of God quietly corrected or overruled. God is certainly great enough and good enough to manage any trivial errors of judgment on our part. Even if we did stumble off the right path, He could be trusted to lead us quietly back. And the future? The Love that has brought us safely so far can be trusted to lead us safely on. It can be counted upon to give us the strength we need for new burdens, the wisdom we need for new decisions. Tomorrow, as well as yesterday, is safe in God's keeping. Therefore we can give our full attention to today. Who can measure the practical value of such an inner attitude, such a way of facing life? Over and over it has shown itself "the faith that overcomes the world."

Not for a day,
Can I discern my way,
But this I surely know:
Who gives the day
Will show the way,
So I securely go.[8]

[8] John Oxenham.

Chapter VI

MANAGING THE LITTLE ANNOYANCES OF LIFE

I

In one of his recent essays Dr. Fosdick tells this interesting story:

> On the slope of Long's Peak in Colorado lies the ruin of a gigantic tree. Naturalists tell us that it stood for some four hundred years. It was a seedling when Columbus landed at San Salvador, and half-grown when the Pilgrims settled at Plymouth. During the course of its long life it was struck by lightning fourteen times, and the innumerable avalanches and storms of four centuries thundered past it. It survived them all. In the end, however, an army of beetles attacked the tree and levelled it to the ground. The insects ate their way through the bark and gradually destroyed the

inner strength of the tree by their tiny but incessant attacks. A forest giant which age had not withered, nor lightning blasted, nor storms subdued, fell at last before beetles so small that a man could crush them between his forefinger and his thumb.

Evidently the hardest problem that the tree faced was not the conquest of occasional and spectacular foes like storm and snowslide. Its hardest problem was to withstand the attack of those insignificant beetles, forever burrowing into its heart. The tree did master the lightning and the gale. But the insects were too much for it.

II

That story has an obvious meaning for most people in our busy, overdriven world. We are threatened today far more seriously—in both health and character—by a multitude of little strains than we are by occasional and spectacular big ones. As a matter of fact, most of us manage the major emergencies of life in a highly commendable fashion. The great trials

—sorrow, hardship, bereavement—call forth by their very magnitude reserves of power waiting within. We rise to the occasion, and meet our great emergencies with a poise and a self-reliance that surprise us scarcely less than they surprise our friends. We survive the attack of storm and avalanche.

But our conflict with the little annoyances of daily life generally reveals a different situation. Consider what a few criticisms do to the average man. These criticisms may be unfair, untrue, unsympathetic—the meanest kind of petty abuse. But usually they are too much for him. They destroy his inner poise, wreck his ability to think and act effectively. Or think of the minor disagreements which sooner or later appear to plague every family. There are scores of homes that withstand the attack of poverty and hardship and death only to break down under the strain of trivial misunderstandings or insignificant quarrels. There are hundreds of fine people who can manage major trials with surprising skill, but who fail miserably before some tiny difference

of opinion with those they love. Professor Henry Sidgwick used to tell the story of an eminent ecclesiastic who became involved in an unexpected dispute with his wife and children. "Did the bishop keep his temper?" someone asked. "Yes," Professor Sidgwick replied, "but he kept it *very obviously.*" Had anything serious happened within that home, the good bishop would have met the situation with splendid equanimity. But under the strain of a petty disagreement he lost his poise. Beetles did what storm and avalanche could not do.

One who understands this situation will readily see why life in our modern world has become so exhausting for great numbers of people. The spectacular hardships which our ancestors knew have been definitely and finally banished. We no longer have to battle with cold, famine, pestilence, and the attack of hostile neighbors. One might jump to the conclusion that the problem of living would, as a result, be vastly simplified. But the fact is that modern men and women have to meet a multitude of little tensions which were wholly

unknown a few generations ago, and which persistently thrust the strain back into existence. Saved from gales and storms, we confront a newly arrived army of beetles.

Once I read about a man who was tied down
And the ants ate him.
His fingers, his ears, his eyes, everything.
At last they even devoured his brain,
Emptying his skull bit by bit. . . .
I am tied down too, and little things are eating me—
The friend who calls me on the phone and talks and talks,
The agent who is determined to sell me a new mop,
The children who quarrel and will not do their lessons,
The letters that must be answered before night somehow,
The ice-man's short weight, the butcher's carelessness,
All these little things are devouring me alive.
My eyes cannot see, my ears cannot hear,
Even my brain is being destroyed,
Only the husk of me smiles wearily on and on.

III

Here and there in life we find individuals who have learned to manage these petty annoyances. They have gained the power not only to meet major disasters, but also the ability to make their way through irritating and exhausting days with unfailing poise and good nature.

Bruce Barton gives a striking example from the life of Abraham Lincoln. All of us are familiar with Lincoln's power to manage heavy burdens—hard work, crushing responsibility, fearful anxiety. His ability to rise above petty troubles was quite as impressive. In the early days of the Civil War, when the Northern armies were suffering one reverse after another and no one could learn the reason for these defeats, Lincoln and a member of the Cabinet broke all rules of procedure and went to the home of General McClellan in Washington to seek an explanation of the situation. They waited for an hour, then McClellan hurried in the front door. He recognized his callers, but went upstairs without a word. Lincoln waited ten minutes, twenty minutes, half an hour. Then he called a servant, and asked him to tell McClellan that the President and his companion were still waiting. Presently the servant returned in obvious embarrassment. With a flush of shame upon his cheek, he explained that McClellan was tired

and out of sorts. The General refused to see anyone, even the President. As a matter of fact, he had already undressed and gone to bed. When Lincoln was outside the house, his companion burst forth in anger. Surely the President would remove that boor from command! But Lincoln smiled quietly, and replied without a trace of impatience, "No, I won't do that. Why, I'll hold McClellan's horse if he will only bring us victories." How perfectly Lincoln could manage little annoyances!

Jesus seems to have had a similar ability. Late one afternoon He and the disciples approached a Samaritan village and asked shelter for the night. But the old hatred between Samaritans and Jews flared up, and the villagers shouted that there was no place for the strangers within their walls. No wonder the disciples lost their temper. No wonder they proposed calling down fire from heaven to destroy that inhospitable place. A long, hard day—and now treatment like this! But Jesus' attitude was different. He pointed

quietly through the gathering darkness to the next village, and led the way there. Why make a scene? Many of us can no longer accept the ideas about Jesus' person which were formulated in a bygone age. But let us never forget that He was a man who mastered one of the most difficult arts in the world—the art of living quietly under tension. He knew how to handle the little annoyances as well as the major difficulties of life.

IV

How can we gain that power today? Perhaps the best way to begin is to practice keeping our sense of proportion. More than once it is loss of perspective that makes life suddenly unendurable. More than once it is recovery of the sense of proportion which enables us to smile and go about our work once more.

Did you ever read the letter that Robert Cushman, one of the Pilgrims, wrote on board the "Mayflower" just before she sailed in 1620? Poor Cushman had been worn out by the thousand and one petty difficulties incident

to preparing for the voyage, and finally—with the irritability and hopelessness of all overtired people—he wrote these despairing sentences:

> If we ever make a plantation in New England, God works a miracle! Specially considering how scant we shall be of victuals, and (worst of all) ununited amongst ourselves. If I should write you of all the things that foretell our ruin, I should overcharge my weak head and grieve your tender heart. Only this I pray you. Prepare for evil tidings of us every day. I see not in reason how we can escape. Pray for us instantly.

Why had the difficulties of that situation finally become too much for Cushman? Because his sense of proportion had momentarily deserted him. How could he regain his normal poise and courage and hope? By regaining his perspective—on himself, on his comrades, on the venture itself, and on the resources and the unfailing help of God.

This principle has an obvious and an imme-

diate application in any lives. You are unhappy today over the unkind comments that are being made on your work, your personal traits, your way of doing things? Study those criticisms in a true perspective. They represent the verdict—probably the hasty and ill-considered verdict—of a few people. Beyond that little group is the throng of your friends, the men and women who believe in you, love you, and find infinite satisfaction in the use you have made of your opportunities. As soon as you regain your sense of proportion you will find yourself rising above this unhappiness and depression. Your home is wretched today because of an unexpected difference of opinion within the family? You think this is the beginning of the end—the first evidence of a division between parents and children, or even between parents themselves? Study that unfortunate state of affairs in a true perspective. After all, this day of friction fills only a tiny place in the long years of life together. Family love has been growing too long and too deep to be uprooted by this single storm.

Because I loved, but would not let you speak,
Your silence in my memory sings;
Like God, your patience obstinate and meek
Waits at the heart of things.

And when my mood falls from me, leaves me stark,
Only a blind need through and through,
As wounded beasts crawl off to find the dark
I know my way to you![1]

V

Another thing all of us might well do as we face this familiar problem is to learn to rest between successive tasks. That simple practice, the habit of laying our burden down for a moment now and then, will bring almost unimaginable relief. It will give us that tiny amount of fresh resilience which changes defeat into victory.

It is this practice which is so strongly recommended by the physicians and psychiatrists of our time, and which is constantly taught by the new cults of healing. Here is a typical statement:

One secret of energy and effectiveness

[1] Beatrice W. Ravenel.

is to keep the mind rested, even in the midst of multitudinous activities. This principle of resting between efforts is one of the fundamental laws of the body. The heart is not always active, as many people suppose. It has its brief period of rest after each beat, a fraction of a second during which there is just enough relaxation to refresh the muscles for their next effort. Similarly our nerves rest (if we will let them) for the merest instant of time between the passing of successive impulses. These physiological processes point the way to the attainment of mental and spiritual power. Life, like music, has its rhythm of silence as well as sound, its crests of surging energy and its quiet calm in the trough of the wave. This art of resting does not mean that we must withdraw from the world in long periods of retreat. Rather it means that we must gain such control of thought and feeling that we can, whenever occasion offers, dismiss our problems and anxieties, relax the

> mind, and thus gather strength for our next effort. This art of resting the mind, dismissing even for a few moments all care and worry, is one of the secrets of the apparently exhaustless energy of men like Napoleon, Gladstone, and Edison.[2]

Statements like these make plain our modern theory of God's help. We believe that His life, His wisdom, His power surround our human lives as the air surrounds the uncounted birds in flight, or as the all-encompassing sea surrounds the innumerable forms of marine life suspended within its depth. Whenever we grow quiet—either in the old act of prayer or in this new act of resting the mind—what happens? There are of course certain benefits that accrue from the mere act of relaxation. But some of us are convinced that this is not the only help that comes. We believe that the doorways of the human spirit open onto the vastness of a Greater Life beyond. From that Greater Life flow strength, wisdom, and endurance which are not of our own making.

[2] J. A. Hadfield, *The Psychology of Power.*

The act of relaxation does more than relieve our inward tension. It quietly opens the doorways of our inner life and permits the ever-available help of God Himself to stream into our spirit. It is this experience of inner renewal, this "restoring of the soul," which is repeated day and night by millions of people all over the world and which keeps religion alive century after century.

Out of the vastness that is God
I summon the power to heal me;
It comes, with peace ineffable
And patience, to anneal me.
Out of the vastness that is God
I summon the power to still me;
It comes, from inner depths divine
With destinies that thrill me.

Out of the vastness that is God
I summon the power to keep me,
And from all fleshy ills that fret
With spirit winds to sweep me;
Ajar I set my soul-doors
Toward unbounded life,
And lo, infinitudes of power
Flow through me, vigor-rife![2]

[2] Cale Young Rice.

VI

Some of us have also found great help in recalling, whenever we meet petty and annoying irritations, that we can put to good use every experience that comes to us. The disappointments, frustrations, and little difficulties that fill our days need not be wasted. They certainly need not be counted useless burdens which must be borne wearily and then dropped gladly. Rather, each of these experiences can be made to contribute something to the discipline of the will and the enrichment of the character. All things—trivial annoyances included—can be made to "work together for good."

The truth of this principle is clearly evident in the case of life's major hardships. One of our humorists has recently defined a successful man as one who meets a wolf at the door and the next day appears in a fur coat. Behind those amusing words lies one of the great truths of human experience. Brave men and women do turn tragic experiences into occa-

sions of spiritual triumph, sources of personal enrichment. We think of Tennyson, winning from his saddest bereavement the inspiration that shines in the stanzas of *In Memoriam*. We think of Charles Darwin, saying quietly at the end of a long and immensely useful life, "I would never have done so much work if I had not been so great an invalid." We think of our own Dr. Trudeau, exiled by tuberculosis to the Adirondacks, and then heroically turning his supposed graveyard into the world's greatest sanatorium. How his words of triumph rouse the courage in our own hearts!

> As I look back on my life, tuberculosis looms up as an ever-present and relentless foe. It robbed me of my dear ones, and brought me the first great sorrows of my life. It shattered my health when I was young and strong, and relegated me to this remote region where ever since I have witnessed its withering blight laid on those about me. Yet the struggle with tuberculosis has brought me experiences and

left me recollections which I never could have known otherwise, and which I would not exchange for the wealth of the Indies.'[1] All these men, and thousands of others like them, have actually benefited by their hardest experiences.

Suppose, as you face another week of strain and difficulty, you remind yourself that the little hardships of life can be utilized in this same constructive fashion. Nothing that happens to you need be counted valueless, merely endured as troublesome and annoying misfortune. You can find some use for every experience, and a week hence be a finer and stronger personality than you are today. Consider the benefit you can derive from petty criticism. Granted that the criticism may be untrue and unfair, motivated by jealousy and permeated with spite. From those unkind comments you can still learn how your personality and your ways of working impress the people whose respect you need to win. You can discover at

[1] Edward Livingston Trudeau, *Autobiography.*

what points you are opening yourself to misinterpretation and stirring up opposition. These things are worth knowing, and a brave man is glad to pay the price of wounded feelings for them. It may be a scrawny and savage wolf you find at the door, but something can be done even with a pelt like his!

The little heartaches of everyday life can be utilized in a similar fashion. After all, these minor hardships need not be mere crosses, carried laboriously up some unnoticed Calvary. Out of such petty but painful disciplines you can win some of the most valuable qualities in human life—sympathy, tolerance, an infinite patience with ordinary people. Would Jesus Himself ever have become perfect except, as the New Testament so clearly states, "through suffering"? Obviously that suffering was not limited to the spectacular agony of Calvary. It began in a home in Nazareth where there was tragically little sympathy or understanding, and it continued all the way through a career that was marked by constant rejection and defeat.

Iron left in the rain,
The fog and the dew,
With rust is covered. Pain
Rusts into beauty too. . . .
I know full well that this is so,
I had a heartache long ago.[5]

VII

Our final suggestion to those who seek victory over little things is this. Begin to think of your life as something eternal, of your career as a growth and an education that will continue forever.

One reason why life has come to be exhausting for multitudes of people today is that they have lost this sense of permanence. They have come to picture their career as a succession of trivial, meaningless tasks, carried on in the face of ever-increasing hardships, and finally abandoned forever. What, in all frankness, does such an existence amount to? If we vanish forever in the dark, leaving behind only a fading influence and a transient memory, then the average man may well be pardoned if he does not develop enthusiasm

[5] Mary Carolyn Davies.

for the hard business of living. Why should he? In the final analysis he is merely drawing pictures in the sand while the incoming tide creeps ever nearer, or building images of snow as the April sunshine leads on the inevitable spring.

The remedy for such despair is to think of life in nobler and more enduring terms. How does modern Christianity interpret human existence? We Christians cannot believe that human personalities are the transient products of physical and mental mechanisms. We cannot agree that they are only fluttering sparks, generated by the dynamo of the body and the brain. Rather we are convinced that human personalities are timeless and eternal, created by God Himself and sharing His unending life. Here in our familiar world of Time and Space and Matter these personalities begin their endless development, perfecting themselves under the varied disciplines of the years. Death? Death marks no real break in the education of the self. It certainly does not

mean the end of the schooling. Death is only a minor biological occurrence, a trivial incident of the physical life. It is quite as insignificant as the loss of consciousness during sleep. Death is nothing to be afraid of, nothing to seek deliverance from. Beyond death lies—for every human being—the second phase of an existence which reaches forward to the very limits of Time.

Once a man gains this view of his own career much of the tension and unhappiness of daily life will vanish. What difference does it make which set of experiences we meet today and which tomorrow? Out of them all comes that slow education of the self which is the real aim of our existence here. Through them all God is giving us our chance to grow, to move one step nearer perfection. Beyond them all lies that ampler world of opportunity and happiness where the powers we gain here will be put to fuller and more permanent use, and where the love and friendship we only begin to explore here will be ours forever.

Often I push my books away
To search (there's heartbreak in the play)
A map of star-embroidered sky
And finger Space, where you and I
Shall meet again beyond our grief
And kiss it into unbelief.

World after world I shall be vexed
To miss you. . . . Then I'll try the next
In patient valor. . . . Slowly nears
Your kiss—and what's a million years
For me to wait if, when I turn
Some golden corner, I discern

A little pinched for lack of mirth
The face that shook my life on earth?
Then I shall run to see if you
Still wear those eyes of gray in blue. . . .
The danger is my heart shall beat
Too loud, and kill me at your feet![6]

[6] Norman Gale.

Chapter VII

RELIEVING INWARD TENSION

I

One of our magazines recently published this unusual verse. It is called "Safe Secrets."

I shall carry terrible things to the grave with me,
Things that can never be told.
My eyes will be ready for sleep and my heart for dust
With all the secrets that they hold.
The piteous things alive in my memory
Will be safe in that soundless dwelling;
In the clean loam, in the dark where the dumb roots rust,
I can sleep without fear of telling.[1]

Those vivid lines describe an all too familiar situation. The world is full of people who have—locked somewhere in their memory—unhappy thoughts they will not reveal to anyone, even to the persons they love best. There, for instance, is a group of young people, apparently happy and carefree. How surprised the parents would be if they could look into the depths of those hearts! Unhappy secrets there, and in more than one life a tor-

[1] William Alexander Percy.

turing sense of guilt or failure that is never quite obliterated. Or there is a woman who seems to have everything that anyone could wish. How astonished her friends would be to know what heartaches she carries with her day after day! Dreams that never came true, hopes that have now passed beyond all possibility of fulfilment. Or there is a man whom the community counts a complete success. Wealth, position, influence, children who have realized the fine promise of their youth—where is there the slightest shadow of disappointment in such a life? But all the time there are secret tensions within that personality which the world never guesses. This is the theme of Edwin Robinson's unforgettable poem, "Richard Cory."

Whenever Richard Cory went downtown
We people on the pavement looked at him;
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean favored, and imperially slim.

And he was rich, yes richer than a king,
And admirably schooled in every grace;
In fine we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked and waited for the light,
And went without the meat and cursed the bread. . . .
And Richard Cory one calm summer night
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

II

Much of the wretchedness and failure in our world can be traced to dismal secrets like these. There is an analogy in the field of physical sickness which will occur to us all. Time and again distressing symptoms in one part of the body are traceable to an obscure infection in some distant organ. One of our essayists remarks humorously, "If I find myself limping in my left knee, I am likely to assume that my left knee is the actual seat of my ailment and that any proposed cure must involve a treatment of that particular joint. But a skilful doctor may well discover that the lameness in my knee originates in an infection at the root of an old tooth, and that if I want to walk comfortably I shall have to see a dentist." This same principle of obscure infections and distant symptoms holds true in the realm of the spirit. If you are unhappy, bewildered, inwardly

tense, your spiritual difficulties may well be traceable to a wholly unexpected quarter. You say your inability to concentrate your mind is due to a defective mental mechanism? Perhaps not. A skilful physician of souls would want to probe your memory and find whether unhappy secrets are lurking there. Time and again it is an evil desire or a hated recollection which makes easy concentration of the mind impossible. You think your sense of loneliness and isolation is part of an unfortunate family inheritance? That feeling may come from an entirely different source. It may be the result of secret brooding. It may be the outward symptom of hidden and unhappy recollections. If you want to find power for everyday living you would do well to look deep into your heart and find whether inward tensions are lurking there. Only when these secret infections of the mind and spirit are cleared away will you have that outward vigor and effectiveness you crave.

III

How can a man relieve his own hidden ten-

sions? One way is to make a deliberate effort to drop grudges. Grudges against people, and grudges against life itself—all of them must be quietly and resolutely laid aside. Until this is done there will be a constant and an almost fatal strain within the personality.

This undoubtedly explains why Jesus, the Master of the human soul, laid such emphasis on the simple duty of forgiveness. He knew human nature well enough to realize that as long as a trace of personal resentment remains within a man's heart there is the possibility of secret infection and outward defeat. Peter asks how many times he ought to forgive the people who have wronged him, and makes the commendable promise that he will forgive them no less than seven times. That was an advanced position in a world still dominated by the old theory of even-handed retribution, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." But Jesus insists that even Peter does not go far enough. There must be literally no limit to forgiveness. "Forgive till seventy times seven." Someone else asks Jesus about the

value of religious rituals—prayer, public worship, sacrificial offerings, and the like. Are these practices always helpful? Jesus confesses frankly that they are not. If a man has a grudge in his heart, if he comes to the act of worship with any trace of resentment in his spirit, then his religious exercises will do him little good. "First be reconciled with thy brother, *then* come and offer thy gift." And when Jesus suggests a model prayer, what extraordinary emphasis he lays on this duty of forgiveness! "Forgive us our debts *as we forgive* our debtors." We are to ask God to forgive us to exactly the same extent that we ourselves forgive other people. Can you imagine a more vivid way of recalling to human minds the importance of the forgiving spirit?

When Jesus came to the crisis of His own life He heroically put into practice the principle He had been recommending so steadily to others. Think of the moments before the crucifixion. Two Roman soldiers are kneeling, one at the head and the other at the feet of Jesus. Hammers, and a pile of rusty iron

spikes. Then, amid four flashes of agony, Jesus gasps, "Father, forgive! They know not what they do." Why did Jesus emphasize forgiveness so constantly? Why did He practice it Himself, in one of the most unlikely situations imaginable? Because He knew what havoc bitterness—even justifiable bitterness—works in human hearts. He knew that He Himself must forgive if He were to endure the agony of Golgotha. Only when the last trace of resentment is swept away can a man meet the ultimate demands of life.

All this has an obvious meaning for most of us. You want to know the real source of your unhappiness, your ineffectiveness, your flashes of uncontrollable bitterness and anger? Look honestly into your own heart. Do you hate anybody? Do you want to "get even" with anybody? Is there anyone you would like to see suffer? If you can locate any such roots of bitterness you have found the hidden source of your spiritual troubles. A former mayor of New York, maligned by the yellow journals of the city, bitterly criticized by his enemies,

and finally assaulted and almost murdered by a maniac, used to say during his convalescence in the hospital, "Every night I forgive everything, everybody." Gaining that spirit is one price of quiet and effective living.

Or think of the people who have a grudge against life itself. They feel they have good ground for this secret resentment. They worked as hard as the next man did, but fate gave him a fortune and left them penniless. They set their heart on one consolation, worked and prayed and sacrificed for it. But in spite of all their effort it was never given them. Their children too prove a deepening disappointment. What more could parents do for boys and girls? Work, patience, sacrifice, prayer, devotion without stint or limit—and see how disappointing the results are! Not one of the children gives promise of fine character or satisfying achievement. Life has been cruelly unfair. These people have a grudge against existence, and nothing can convince them this grudge is not justified.

But Jesus went through a similar situation,

and went through it without inward bitterness. He certainly deserved a comfortable and successful career. What did life give Him? "Foxes have holes, the birds of the air nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Jesus deserved appreciation and love, a circle of friends who could be trusted to stand by Him through thick and thin. What did life give Him? "They all forsook Him and fled." Jesus deserved gratitude, appreciation, the love of the world He was trying to help. What did Jesus get? The cross on Calvary. If anyone ever had the right to grow inwardly bitter, to hold an implacable grudge against existence itself, that person was Jesus. But what was His attitude? He quietly accepted the situations He found Himself powerless to change. He accepted them without inward bitterness or outward rebellion. "The cup that my Father giveth me, shall I not drink it?" And when Jesus took that attitude the tension and the resultant unhappiness vanished.

If you are in earnest about solving your inner problem, you must—at any cost in strug-

gle and effort—take that same attitude. No one can explain your misfortunes. No one can tell you why they came on you rather than on someone else. Those questions belong to the larger mystery of life itself, a mystery that no one has ever solved. Suppose you do the natural thing. Suppose you hold a permanent grudge against existence. That inward bitterness will infect your own personality, and finally cast its baneful influence on your home, your children, and everyone who comes in contact with you. That is not the solution of your problem. What is? Jesus found the way to live. Drop your grudges. Forgive everything and everybody. Forgive life itself. As soon as you do that the new days of quietness and power will begin. "Come unto me. . . . I will give you rest."

IV

Any man who hopes to rid himself of inward tension must also learn to let the past go, and put the present—no matter how strange or unpromising it seems—into the kind hands of God.

Most of the men and women about us have not yet learned this secret of effective living. Here, for example, is a young man who has just begun a business career. Whenever he grows tired, or whenever prospects seem specially dark, what does he do? Like many tired and disheartened people he immediately begins to resurrect the past and reconsider its vanished alternatives. Suppose he had gone to a different college and made his contacts in a different section of the country. Suppose after leaving college he had waited for a second business opening instead of rushing so hastily into the first. Suppose he had made a different marriage and built a different home. Suppose . . . . As this young man grows older the habit of studying the road not taken grows upon him. The past which he reviews becomes steadily longer, and the crucial decisions to be redebated grow steadily more numerous. Finally a time comes when the innumerable yesterdays occupy a greater portion of his attention than the single today in which he ought to live. Then this man finds himself

hopelessly handicapped by his memories, defeated by his dead and vanished past. "If, thirty years ago, I had only invested my money differently! If, when the children were small, I had only made other plans for their future! If . . ." Quiet and effective living? It is utterly beyond the reach of a man with mental and spiritual habits like these.

How can such a man break free from the habit of brooding? He can remind himself that some of his old decisions were undoubtedly right. Those decisions he certainly would not change, even if he could go back and make them again. Other decisions now seem wrong, but at the time they were orginally made they seemed right. If he could go back into the past and stand again at the crossroads would he not—knowing only what he knew then—choose the same turn in the path? Then that choice represented his best wisdom at the time, and any man who does his best can confidently leave the outcome of his decision to God. God could not ask us to do better than our best. Still other decisions in the past this man

regretted almost at the instant he made them. He had the haunting feeling—even at the moment—that he was making a false move. But will all the regrets, all the remorse, all the bitter self-analysis and self-arraignment in the world bring back those vanished moments? Certainly not! The fateful decision was made, and no power on earth can unmake it. Under those circumstances why not let the past go? Some decisions were right, and those we surely would not change. Others represented our best judgment at the time, and on those we could not improve. Still others were mistaken, but now they are beyond our power to recall. Why not, then, let the past go? "Forgetting the things that are behind . . ." That initial action is quite as important as the succeeding action with which all of us are so familiar. Inward tension vanishes only when we gain control over our own memories.

Who bears in mind misfortunes gone
Will live in fear of more,
The happy man whose heart is right
Gives no such shadows power.

He bears in mind no haunting past
To vex his week on Monday,
He has no graves within his mind
To visit every Sunday.[2]

V

Suppose, as a man tries to forget his own past, he is oppressed by the apparent hopelessness of the present. Suppose it is all too evident that the unfortunate decisions of yesterday have limited tragically the opportunities of today. What then? One of the greatest messages of Christian faith is to the people in this unhappy predicament. To such men and women Christianity says, "No matter what the past has been, God is ready to start afresh in the present. Even if His first purpose for your life was wrecked by blundering circumstance or by your own mistakes, He stands ready to form a second purpose beginning here and now. He will use whatever abilities you have no matter how small or unpromising they may be, and He will begin

[2] W. H. Davies.

using them the moment you start living at your best. As soon as you begin making the most of yourself for Him, He will begin making more of you than you dream."

There are innumerable examples of such a use of thwarted and broken lives. A generation ago a young man in Australia was paralyzed from head to foot. For thirty years he has been lying helpless in bed. The only way in which the doctors could keep him alive was by removing his front teeth and inserting in his mouth a tube through which liquid food was given. Soon after the paralysis developed his sight became affected, and twenty years ago he went blind. What did life hold for a man in that condition? At first he was utterly unreconciled, hopelessly bitter. Then he began to find a certain inner relief by letting the past, with all its inexplicable tragedy, be forgotten; and by putting the present, poor as it was, into the kind hands of God. One day the idea came to him that he might be able to raise a little money for blind people nearly as wretched as

he himself. By thinking about them and working for them he might find a measure of personal happiness. That idea was the beginning of an amazing change. Through a little group of friends he sent appeals to an ever-widening circle, and then relayed the small sums he received to different workers for the blind in other sections of the world. One of his projects today is the support of a blind Bible-woman in the vicinity of Sholapur, India, to whom he forwarded enough money to buy a Bible printed in the Braille system. Day after day she reads it with her sensitive finger tips, and then passes on its message of radiant hope to the blind people about her. Comfort and deliverance for unfortunates in India . . . and coming through whom? Through a man in Australia who has been blind and helpless for years. You think you missed your real chance in life? You say it is too late for God to make any use of you? Listen to the words of promise that echo across the centuries: "He that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." "Behold, I make all things new!"

VI

There are other people, however, who must follow a different course if they hope to relieve their inward tension. Their only way to gain inward peace is to face their own sins honestly, confess their blunders and their wrongdoing, and then make a new start. The secret consciousness of guilt is quite as common a cause of wretchedness as the feeling of bitterness or the sense of failure.

Most of the liberal preachers of our time say very little about sin. Their deliberate silence springs from worthy motives. Many of the sermons of the past, harping constantly on depravity and failure, sent people from church self-conscious and depressed rather than self-forgetful and heroic. The old picture of human nature as essentially vile and sinful was at best a distortion of the truth. The old portrait of God as an angry Being forever ferreting out sin and punishing sinners bore little resemblance to the portrait Jesus painted. When modern preachers discuss subjects other than sin they are following a sound instinct.

Yet the old problem of evil impulse is still with us. "Long ago Plato confessed that he drove two horses—one white and tractable, the other black and vicious. Long ago Jesus reminded us that two masters are forever seeking the allegiance of men—one God, the other Mammon. Long ago Paul admitted that his soul was the battleground of two contending powers—one Spirit, the other Flesh. And in our time one of our own number has pictured the struggle between the two selves in every heart—Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." [3] The old problem of sin has not disappeared with the change in our environment and the increase in our knowledge. We still find ourselves struggling day after day with something hostile inside our own nature. It matters little whether we call that enemy Satan, or our own lower nature, or racial habits, or tendencies inherited from an animal past. Whatever its true name, there it is—a grim reality. When it conquers us, what tortures our wounded conscience can devise! A criminal, serving a

[3] Harry Emerson Fosdick.

long jail sentence, makes this confession: "Just this to close. Even if a man does escape the police, there is something inside him and outside him it's no use trying to beat. Death is mild compared to the thing a criminal finds himself up against. I give it up. I can't explain it." What was the thing that confronted this man at every turn? It was his conscience, his sense of guilt. Whenever we yield to the evil within, that conscience rises ghostlike . . . and it will not down.

Suppose, when all is said, it is a sense of guilt which is responsible for your inward tension. How can you get rid of that sense of guilt? There is only one way. You must face your sin honestly, without any evasion or any attempt at self-justification. You must confess your guilt to yourself and to God, and then start doing what you know is right—no matter what the cost. Until you do this you will be the victim of an inward tension which will grow steadily more unendurable. "Death is mild compared to what a criminal finds himself up

against." Year after year those grim words prove true in human experience.

Many respectable individuals reading these sentences will feel that this suggestion has no bearing on them and their problem. The plain fact is that it has a profound bearing on us all. Modern churches are filled with men and women who, protected for years by an armor of self-justification and smug complacency, need nothing so much as an hour of fearless self-examination and honest contrition. For many of us the first step toward a higher and happier life is the step suggested in one of Jesus' most searching parables. It was the step made by the publican who with bowed head and contrite heart offered the prayer, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!"

It will do no good to lie,
Hold your eyelids wide, look straight!
That is you . . . alone and old,
That hard, dim thing you hate.
You who sit behind the eyes,
Voyaging toward eternity,
Face her, never pity her!
You alone can set her free.

Chapter VIII

UTILIZING ONE'S RESERVE POWERS

I

In a book published just after the War an English physician relates this incident:

> A soldier-patient of mine was buried alive by a high-explosive shell. He was eventually rescued and brought back to our hospital for treatment. One of the striking features of his case was extreme physical weakness. If he made the slightest exertion utter fatigue followed. Yet all the time this man possessed, as we discovered later, extraordinary reserves of physical energy. The trouble was that he could not gain access to these reserves and use them. In the course of our treatment I hypnotized him and forced him to recall the incidents on the battlefield, incidents he had been trying desperately to

forget. Once again he lived through that awful experience—the terrifying blast, debris burying him up to the neck, and a great piece of timber tottering above his head and threatening every instant to fall. These recollections threw the man into a state of extreme terror, and suddenly his vanished strength returned. He began to fight like a madman. Flinging himself on the floor and dragging the bed down in front of him like a barricade, he reached out, seized a heavy armchair, and hurled it furiously across the room. Though previously incapable of the slightest exertion, he now revealed such prodigious strength that it required four orderlies to hold him. When he came out of the hypnotic state he was not physically exhausted. The strange thing was that he felt relieved and refreshed.[1]

Where did this surprising energy come from? It evidently represented a reserve of power hitherto blocked off, but now suddenly

[1] J. A. Hadfield, *The Psychology of Power.*

made available. There is nothing strange or incredible about such an incident. Most of us have seen situations essentially similar though perhaps not so dramatic.

Our reserves of power are not limited to physical strength. We have reserves of mental and spiritual power as well. Time and again all of us have seen men and women who, caught in some sudden emergency, reveal a poise, a quick wisdom, a grim endurance that astonish their friends. Here are reserves of spiritual power corresponding to those reserves of physical strength which we were just discussing. The English physician we were quoting gives this example:

> One of my patients, suffering from nervous breakdown, came to me unexpectedly to say that he must leave our hospital and go home to care for his family. His wife, mother of six small children, had come down with pneumonia and could not get help in the isolated district where she lived. Up to this time this man had been a most despondent and

> depressed patient. He had scarcely spoken to the other men in the ward, and had complained constantly of a feeling of utter exhaustion. How could that man go home, nurse his wife through a critical illness, and care for six fretty children? But that is exactly what he did. When some weeks later he returned to our hospital to complete his treatment, he seemed surprisingly bright and cheerful. Almost his first words to me were, "I shall never again doubt the power of prayer." [2]

Reserves of spiritual power? We all have them. When sudden need arises they rush down from the hinterlands of the personality and turn our threatened defeat into victory. "Out of weakness they were made strong"—those old words describe the experience of innumerable people in our modern world.

II

Where do these reserve powers come from? Some of them are traceable to our family and

[2] J. A. Hadfield, *op. cit.*

our racial inheritance. To most of us the term inheritance suggests only the two parents and the four grandparents with whom we were personally acquainted. But those six individuals represent only an infinitesimal fraction of the vast throng of men and women from whose commingled lives our own has been drawn. Begin to count up your ancestors in the past few centuries. Two parents, four grandparents, eight great-grandparents, sixteen great-great-grandparents—and then how the numbers jump! It was only three centuries ago that the "Mayflower" crossed the Atlantic, and yet in the generation that saw the "Mayflower" sail you could locate over one thousand direct ancestors. Go back to the time of William the Conqueror, nine hundred years ago, and you would accumulate on the way and in William's generation no less than one billion forbears. Those multitudinous lives of the past united generation after generation to form your life today, as a thousand tiny rivulets joined their waters to form the river that pushes onward toward the sea.

I am like a stream that flows
Full of cold springs that arose
In morning lands, on distant hills,
And down the plain my channel fills
With melting of forgotten snows.

Voices I never heard possessed
My own fresh songs. My thoughts are blessed
With relics of a far unknown.
And mixed with memories not my own
The wide stream throngs into my breast.[3]

To some of us this thought of family and racial inheritance has brought immense courage. Granted that some of our ancestors passed on to us a spiritual legacy of dubious value. Other ancestors gave us some of the finest qualities imaginable. The power to think, the power to achieve, the power to endure hard situations and ultimately master them—all these abilities were included in our inheritance. In hours of emergency they reappear to save us. Even now they are hiding within our personality, waiting to be found and used.

[3] Alice Meynell.

III

A second source of our reserve power lies in the delicate mechanisms of the body and the nervous system. You and I watch in wonder and admiration the ingenious machines that modern engineers have devised. Hour after hour, day after day, year after year they do their work—printing newspapers, building boxes, or twisting rope at incredible speed. These mechanisms seem to have the power to solve their own problems and meet their own emergencies. They vary their speed and their energy in accordance with the shifting demands made upon them, adjusting themselves to their burden automatically and with uncanny precision. How often we forget that we ourselves possess mechanisms of nerve and body which are even more delicate, even more responsive! Think, for instance, of the way in which a man's instinctive emotions and reflex actions fit him for the sudden emergencies of life. Professor McDougall of Harvard gives an illustration that has become classic:

A boy, chased across a field by an infuriated bull, succeeded in leaping a high fence and saving himself. Returning to that locality years later and finding the fence still standing, he attempted to jump it without the stimulus of extreme danger. The feat proved impossible. Notwithstanding his increased size and strength, he found he could not scale that barrier. What did it mean? It meant that in the one moment when he had to jump the fence or die, he jumped it. One of the most powerful of the instinctive emotions —fear—released within him an amount of reserve enegry which enabled him to meet his supreme emergency.

Here again many of us find distinct encouragement as we face the hard situations of daily life. We know that when burdens fall heavily upon our shoulders then inner strength will be automatically released to carry them. When a dozen problems gather to perplex us then the mind will automatically quicken its pace. We have nothing to fear as we face the

unpredictable emergencies of life. We were built to meet whatever demands existence thrusts upon us. Instinctively and automatically we rise to the occasion. What we find we must do we invariably find we can do.

IV

Are there any resources beyond our own nature? When inheritance has given its best, and when the mechanisms of nerve and body have done their utmost, are there further reserves of power on which embattled human nature can draw? Think of the testimony given by that invalid who went home to care for his wife and children: "I shall never again doubt the power of prayer." That experience of winning sustaining help from an external source has been repeated over and over again in the lives of unnumbered people. It is hard to believe that all these men and women were completely deluded, that they merely summoned their own reserves and then stupidly concluded that the assistance came from God. Most of us are convinced that their lives did

open on some Greater Life at the heart of things, as the innumerable bays and inlets along the seacoast open on the vastness of the deep. You and I are not at the end of our resources when we have summoned all the human power within. At that point we begin to draw—literally—upon the fulness of God. "At their wits' end . . . *then* God." That has been the experience of the generations.

Most people, sincerely anxious to gain some such faith in a Source of Help beyond themselves, are hindered in their quest by their inability to adjust the old conceptions of God to the new facts revealed by modern knowledge. Perhaps such individuals will find this thought of God suggestive. As you stand before me I realize that there are two distinct elements in you. One is the physical body, of which I am acutely conscious. It is the obvious part of you. Yet I know there is something more to you than a material body. Permeating every part of that physical organism there is something else—unseen but immensely important. It is so important that its presence or

absence makes the difference between you alive and you dead. Men have never understood fully this second part of our nature, and they have given it indefinite and abstract names such as "soul," "spirit," "ego," "personality." But even if we cannot explain or describe this strange thing within us, we know it is a reality. How could any man question the existence of his own inner self? If he did, what would it be that did the questioning?

Suppose you think of God in terms like these. We all find ourselves in a universe which is scarcely less puzzling than the human creatures that fill it. The most obvious realities in that universe are the physical objects which make their instant appeal to our five senses. Yet the more we think about these objects, the orderly world which they form, and the carefully interrelated processes by which they come into being, the harder it is to believe that there is nothing else here. Could we possibly explain such a universe as ours, such a coherent and intelligent process as the course of evolution, and such innumerable evidence of apparent

purpose and adjustment of means to end, on the easy theory that all these things are the result of the fortuitous incidence of blind force on inert matter, assisted by the steady elimination of everything unfit? A more likely explanation of the facts is that a Creative Intelligence, a Mind-Power-Goodness which we call God, permeates our universe and works through it, much as our human personalities permeate and work through our physical bodies. We cannot localize this Indwelling God, any more than we can localize our own spirit within our own body. We cannot describe His appearance, any more than we can picture ourselves apart from the mechanism through which we operate. Yet we are convinced God is here, just as we are convinced that we ourselves are realities and not illusions.

Over the great city
Where the wind rustles through the parks and the gardens,
In the air, in the high clouds brooding,
There I am. . . .
Think not because I do not appear at first glance,
Because the centuries have gone by

And there are no assured tidings of me,
That therefore I am not there.
Think not that because all goes its own way
That therefore I do not go my own way through all.
The fixed bent of hurrying faces in the street,
Each turned toward its own light and seeing no other,
Yet I am the Light toward which they all look.
The toil of so many hands toward such multifarious ends,
Yet my Hand knows the touch and the twining of them all.
Make no mistake, do not be deluded.
Over the great city
There I am.[4]

V

Suppose there is some truth in this view of life. Suppose there are these reserves of power just beyond us. How can we draw upon them?

Apparently our own inner attitudes determine the extent of the help that comes to us from these reservoirs beyond. By our habits of life and thought we control the flow of power coming to us from both our inner nature and from the Greater Resource beyond. It is as though we opened or closed floodgates separating a depleted pond from some vast reservoir in the hills. How do we fling wide

[4] Edward Carpenter.

the gates? Apparently the three mental and spiritual attitudes which are necessary are these.

We must, to begin with, hold a high opinion of ourselves and of our place in the universe. That belief, held quietly within the depths of a human heart, will release day by day a surprising amount of surplus power. For centuries men have sensed this fact and have formulated such proverbs as, "According to your faith be it unto you." In our own time the effects of reiterated suggestion, even the suggestions a man makes to himself about himself and his place in the scheme of things, have been carefully measured by psychologists. A British investigator found that when three soldiers who had been hypnotized were told again and again that they were physical weaklings, their strength actually dwindled to only 30% of normal. When the same men, still under hypnosis, were told that they possessed the strength of giants, their strength actually increased to 140% of normal. They proved, by actual tests with a dynamometer, to

be more than one-third stronger than they had ever been before. Such are the human reserves available to us. Such is the effect of a man's secret beliefs on his own physical nature.

With facts like these before us we can see a new significance in the rival interpretations of existence offered the men and women of our time. What is the practical effect of the materialistic view of life? How does the suggestion of helplessness, insignificance, and transiency react upon the cynic himself?

> A little while when I am gone
> My life will live in music after me,
> As spun foam lifted and borne on
> After the wave is lost in the full sea.
> Awhile these nights and days will burn
> In song, with the brief frailty of foam,
> Living in light before they turn
> Back to the nothingness which is their home.[5]

Could a man who held that estimate of himself and his career generate much courage for hard days, or release many reserve powers for the crises of life and death? In the sharpest possible contrast is the attitude toward existence implied in these lines:

[5] Sara Teasdale.

I know not what the future hath
Of marvel or surprise,
Assured alone that life and death
His mercy underlies.
I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air,
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.[6]

A man who is in earnest about utilizing his own reserve powers should think twice before abandoning the Christian attitude toward life and accepting the views of materialism. The plain fact is that a mean view of oneself and one's work will shut tight the floodgates of spiritual power. The men who live heroically and effectively invariably prove to be men who hold a high opinion of themselves and of human life. Would a view of existence which issued so constantly in triumphant living be likely to be wholly false?

VI

A man who hopes to utilize his own reserve powers must also learn to face his own immediate problems and difficulties with unfalter-

[6] John Greenleaf Whittier.

ing confidence and courage. Fear, as the psychologists constantly remind us, is quite as fatal an inhibition as a mean estimate of oneself. One careful student of human nature writes:

> The instinct of fear was, of course, originally essential. Without it our animal forbears would have perished miserably, and without a certain amount of it most of us would be run down in the streets today. We must also confess that the fear-instinct often stimulates us in times of danger, and on occasion enables us to do what is normally impossible. Yet when all is said, the strength of the fear-impulse is now far greater than our present situation requires. Life has become comparatively safe for us all. We no longer need powerful fears to keep us out of danger and thus save our lives. The result of this change in our environment is that the average person now has a far greater supply of fear than he needs. The excess tends to overflow into false

> channels and set up strange inhibitions and fatal disturbances within the personality. It is this surplus fear which makes well-to-do people worry about possible poverty, and healthy people needlessly apprehensive about their physical condition. It is this excess fear which sets mothers worrying about their children, and makes us all afraid of death. It was not without reason that the Master of the human soul said so often, "Fear not!" If surplus fear could be obliterated, most psychotherapists would find their work done for them.[7]

Those words have an evident application to many of the half-energized and semi-victorious people we see about us. For years they have been stifling their power, dulling their mind, undermining their health, and limiting their own achievement by self-administered injections of fear. What would happen if they began to face life and its problems with the heroic confidence and assurance that Jesus

[7] J. A. Hadfield, *The Psychology of Power.*

pleaded for? They would find their own reserves of power suddenly opened to them, and still more strength streaming into their lives from the Living God. They would literally startle themselves and their friends by their new-found power—power to gain health, power to meet hardships, power to endure strain, power to achieve the so-called impossible. One modern teacher writes:

> All about us are men and women who are failing in life simply because they lack the confident belief that they can and will succeed. Meanwhile individuals with smaller abilities and fewer talents, but with greater courage and self-confidence, press forward to seize the finest prizes life has to offer. Time and again it is a man's belief in his own power which releases that final ounce of energy which spells the difference between mediocrity and great achievement. Time and again Jesus' words come true in human experience today, "According to your faith be it unto you."

VII

These first two suggestions belong obviously in the realm of applied psychology. The third suggestion carries us into the realm of religious faith. If you want to utilize your reserve powers, start living at your own best and then look confidently for direct and sustaining help from God.

As we were just saying, many of us are convinced that we are not wholly dependent on our own resources as we struggle to attain the more abundant life. We believe that help comes to us from a Source Beyond, that Friendly Someone at the heart of things whom men call God. Granted that His help reaches us through the normal processes of the mind and the body rather than in spite of them. Granted that it reveals itself as a heightening of existing powers rather than the miraculous creation of new ones. The source of this assistance lies, we are convinced, outside ourselves. We do not summon our own courage and rouse our own strength. Rather we are given help by Someone else, Someone with whom we come

in touch whenever we rise to the level of our own best. William James stated this view of life in these suggestive phrases: "Man becomes conscious that his own spiritual nature is coterminous with a More of the same quality which is operative in the universe outside him. He can keep in working touch with it, and (in a fashion) get on board of it and save his higher life when all his lower being goes to pieces in the wreck." Even more brilliant are the figures of speech in which Dr. Fosdick expresses the same conviction:

> Where does the restlessness of April have its source? Every tree in its discontent hastens to make buds into leaves. Every blade of grass is tremulous with impatient life. No tree, however, is a sufficient explanation of its own haste and dissatisfaction. No flower has within itself the full secret of its own eager growth. The spirit of life is abroad once more, and crowding itself onto the dead forms of March makes them bloom with the new glory of April. We too are con-

fronted with an Eternal Life which is forever trying to express itself through us. We can never escape from this ever-present God. Every time we open an inspiring book His spirit pleads for entrance into our hearts. Every time we pray He stands at the door and knocks. Every time some great cause demanding sacrifice lays its imperious claim upon us, God seeks entrance into our lives. Our hunger for food, our love for family and friends, bring no more direct and tangible dealings with an external reality than these experiences with the Living God.

If God has this help for us, how do we gain it? Here is the ultimate question in religion, and Jesus gave a very daring answer. In fact His answer was so daring that even yet most of His followers refuse to believe it. Jesus says that men gain God's proffered help without any teasing, without any bribing, without any intermediary intercessors, without any sacramental system, without any antecedent ortho-

doxy of belief. When men want God's help all they have to do is begin living at their own best, and then reach out and take it. Invariably God responds to their need, answers their half-articulate prayer. God responds no matter who they are, where they are, what their present problem is, or what their past record has been. "Everyone that asketh receiveth. Everyone that seeketh findeth. To everyone that knocketh it shall be opened." Here is the good news about God's free help which Jesus tried to bring. It is the gospel He still offers the world.

You are facing a hard situation in your own life? You need help from a source beyond yourself? You do not have to approach God through someone else. You do not have to rouse His interest, or catch His attention, or prove yourself worthy of His assistance. Even now God stands outside your life, ready and willing to do for you everything that love can do. God is waiting for only one act on your part—for you to start living at your best. The

moment you do that His reserves of wisdom, strength, and courage begin to flow toward you. Not because you have changed God. Rather because you have made yourself able to take what God has always been only too eager to give.

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